

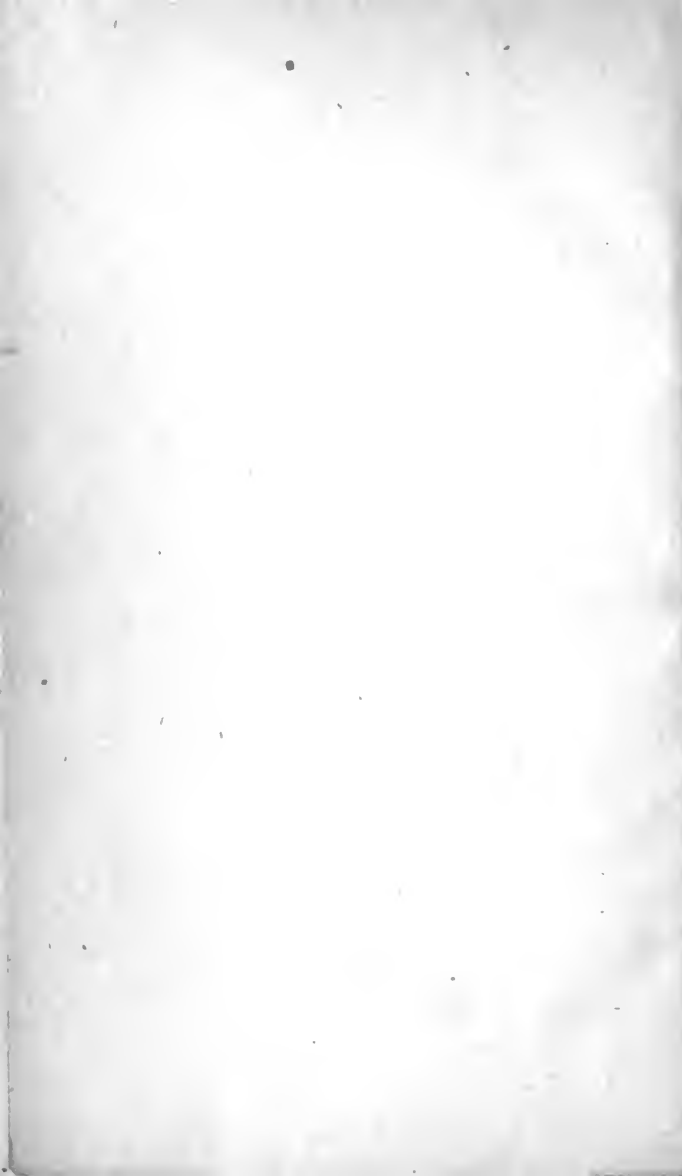
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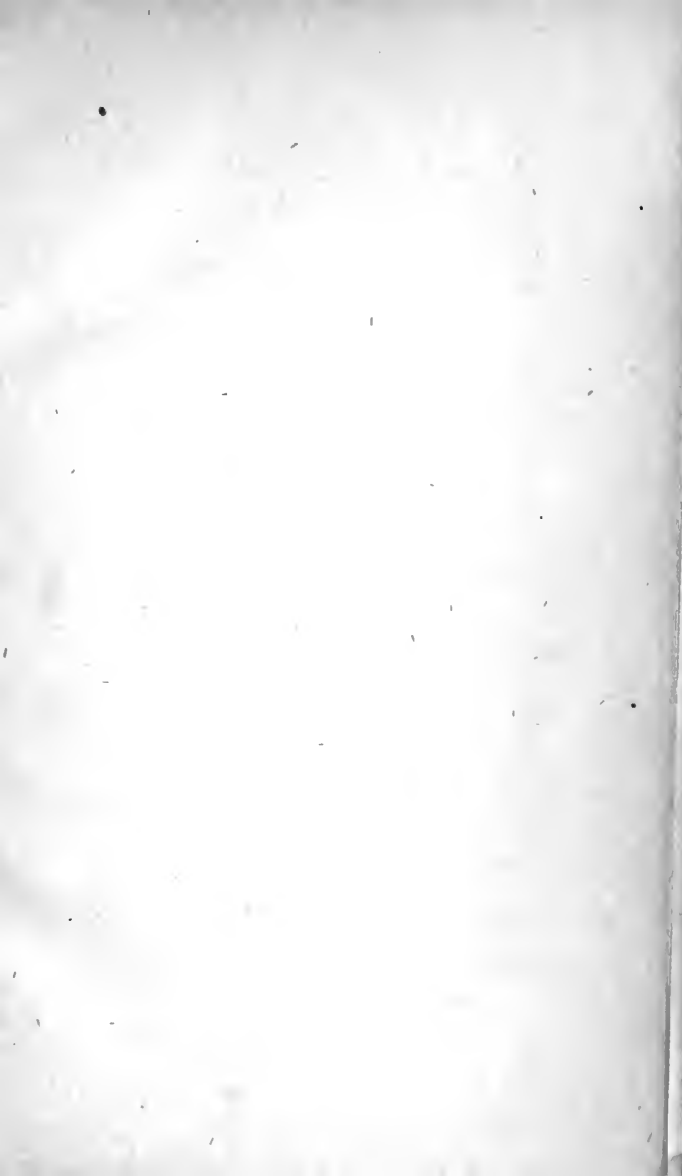


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S T A N D A R D

N O V E L S.

N° VII.

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

BY MISS JANE PORTER.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,

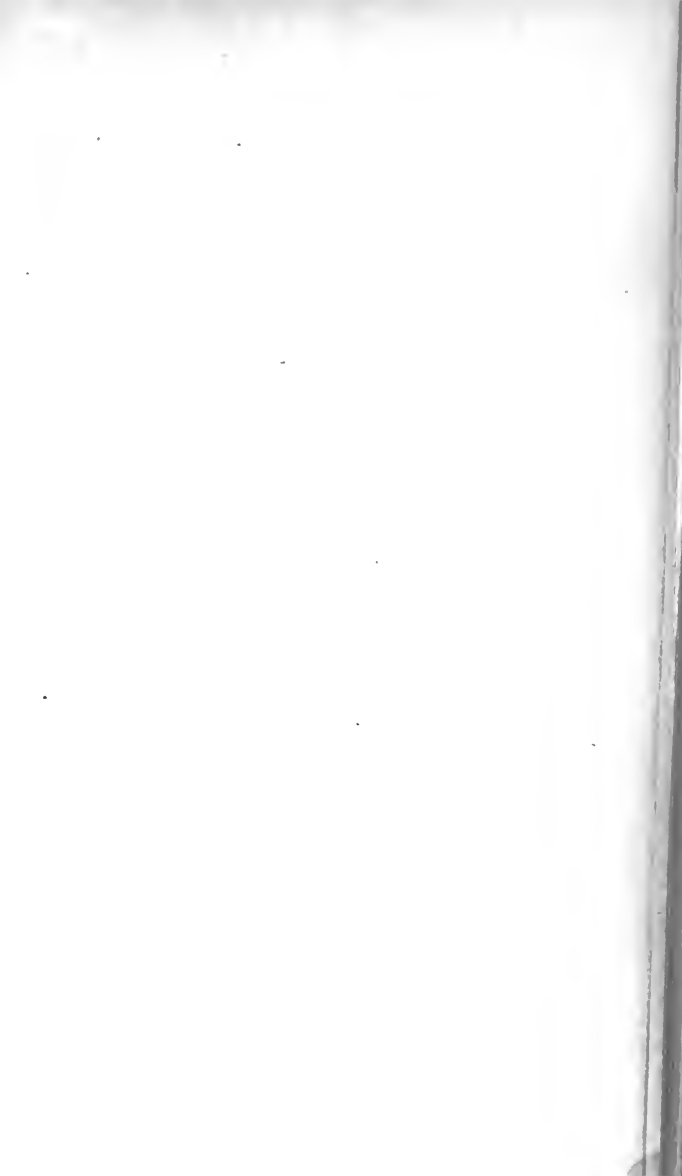
NEW BURLINGTON STREET:

BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;

AND CUMMING, DUBLIN.

1331.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.





THE HISTORY OF THE

A HISTORY OF

BY

JOHN P. ...

VOL II





THE
SCOTTISH CHIEFS,

A Romance.

There comes a voice that awakes my soul. It is the voice of
years that are gone; they roll before me with their deeds.

OSSIAN.

BY
MISS JANE PORTER.

REVISED, CORRECTED,
AND ILLUSTRATED WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION, NOTES, ETC.
BY THE AUTHOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET:
BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;
AND CUMMING, DUBLIN.
1831.

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TO
THE FAMILIES OF RUTHVEN

AND OF

ELPHINSTONE,

WHOSE ILLUSTRIOUS ANCESTORS

WERE THE FAITHFUL ADHERENTS OF THE PATRIOT HEROES OF
HER WORK ;

THIS LAST EDITION

OF

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS,

REVISED BY ITS AUTHOR IN THE YEAR 1831,

IS INSCRIBED,

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF

THE EARLIEST AND MOST BELOVED FRIENDS OF HER YOUTH,

WHO BORE THOSE NOBLE NAMES,

WITH ALL THEIR HEREDITARY VIRTUES.

SOME OF THOSE FRIENDS HAVE LONG BEEN " GATHERED TO THEIR
FATHERS," INTO A " BETTER WORLD ;"

BUT AS SOME REMAIN TO CHEER HER EVENING PATH,

SHE HAS A GRATEFUL PLEASURE IN THUS UNITING

HER NAME WITH THEIRS,

ON THIS LITTLE MONUMENTAL URN,

DEDICATED, TWENTY YEARS AGO,

TO THE MEMORIES OF

SIR WILLIAM WALLACE,

AND

KING ROBERT BRUCE ;

BY

THE VENERATING PEN OF

JANE PORTER.

A
RETROSPECTIVE INTRODUCTION
TO THE
STANDARD EDITION
OF
THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

A. D. 1831.

IN seeking to go back, by the traces of recollection, to the period when the first impression of the heroes which form the story of the Scottish Chiefs was made on my mind, I am carried so completely into the scenes of my infancy, that I feel like one of the children old tales tell of, who, being lost in a wood, tries to find her way home again, by the possibly preserved track of a few corn seeds she had chanced to scatter on the ground as she came.

To wander in these memories, has, however, a pleasure of its own; many pleasant places presenting themselves to stop at, and thence to review with a sweet sadness, through the long vale of past days, some distant, lovely scene, under the soul-hallowed twilight of time.—Such scenes are peopled with beloved forms, living there before our heart's eye; but, in reality, long removed from us into an eternal paradise.

Born on the border lands of Scotland, my mother, in an early widowhood, took her children thither, then almost infants; to bring them up in good air, and in the future advantage of a good education at a moderate expense. But in Scotland, it is not the "pastors and masters" only who educate the people; there is a spirit of wholesome knowledge in the country, pervading all ranks, which passes from one to the other like the atmosphere they breathe; and I may truly say, that I was hardly six years of age when I first heard the names of William Wallace and Robert Bruce:—not from gentlemen and ladies, readers of history; but from the maids in the nursery, and the serving-man in the kitchen: the one had their songs of "Wallace wight!" to lull my baby sister to sleep; and the other, his tales of "Bannockburn," and "Cambuskenneth," to entertain my young brother,—keeping his eager attention awake evening after evening, often to a late hour, and sending him to his bed, still asking for more, to see the heroes in his dreams.

I remember with delight even now how I was amused for hours in the same way, by a venerable old woman called Luckie Forbes; who lived in a humble but comfortable occupation, near some beautiful green banks, which rose in natural terraces behind my mother's house; and who, often meeting me there when playing about, would walk by me, and talk to me, with her knitting in her hand; or I used to run to her own little home, and sit down on a stool by her side, while she told me of the wonderful deeds of William Wallace:—of his fighting for Scotland, against as many cruel tyrants as those whom Abraham overcame, when he recovered Lot and all his herds and flocks from the

five robber-kings, in the vale that was afterwards called *the kings' dale* because of that victory. My lowly instructress never omitted an opportunity of mingling a pious allusion with her narrations. In like manner, at many a cottar's fireside in Scotland, the seed of the bread for this life and of that which is to come are sown together. From this custom of hers, I often listened to her with an awful reverence, as well as with delighted interest in the events of her stories.

She described the person of Wallace from head to foot, as if she had seen him; telling me how comely he was, and how lofty in spirit; and that no temptation from "*bonnie leddy*" or powerful prince could ever bribe him from the cause of Scotland. But she seemed to have most satisfaction in talking of the friendship between Wallace and Bruce; and she dwelt on it over and over again, comparing it with that of David and Jonathan, "whose souls were knit together, and whose love for each other was wonderful, passing the love of women!" — "My bonnie bairn," said she, "*there is a Friend that sticheth closer than a brother!*"

I never can forget that dear old woman; so shrewd, yet simple-minded, and cheerfully religious: she performed her humble duties with activity and content; her recreation, and "exceeding great reward," was reading her Bible, which she did every day. I do not recollect ever seeing any other book in her house; though she knew the history of Scotland, and the biography of its great families, as accurately as if the top of her *muckle kist*, on which her Bible lay, had been filled with historical chronicles. Luckie Forbes was not singular in this simplicity of book-learning and comprehensive knowledge with regard to her own

country. I remember to have met much of the same amongst most of the Scotch of the lower orders with whom, whether as a child or in later years, I became acquainted. I do not say that I did not hear of the "doughty deeds" of her favourite heroes from the lips of our revered school-instructor, Mr. Fulton, of Niddry's Wynd, whose lessons were always chosen from the noblest subjects; nor, indeed, from occasional references, made by several accomplished scholars and esteemed friends who visited my honoured mother's unpretending tea-table:—but I must avow, that to Luckie Forbes's familiar, and even endearing, manner of narrating the lives of William Wallace and his dauntless followers; her representation of their heart-sacrifices for the good of their country, filling me with an admiration and a reverential amazement, like her own; and calling forth my tears and sobs, when she told of the deaths of some, and of the cruel execution of the virtuous leader of them all;—to her I must date my early and continued enthusiasm in the character of Sir William Wallace! and in the friends his truly heroic soul "delighted to honour."

But Scotland, at the time especially when we were gathering our first aliments of mental existence there, might have been particularly designated "the land of enthusiasm for all gallant and disinterested emotions." I should say, of generous principles! when we revert to the primary source of some of our regretted misdirected emotions of this order; such as compassion for the unfortunate defence of the weaker side, which, unwittingly, too often would impede the natural march of a just change in the order of men's destinies.

At the time I speak of, many of the widows and

orphans, who had been made such by the eventful struggle for the British crown in the year 1745, were still existing. The widows of the fallen or executed brave men, nobles or gentry, who had adhered through every peril to the cause of the Stuarts, and so perished with it, lived in dignified poverty, in the remote alleys and by-places of their own once regal Edinburgh; and the accidental sight of any of these noble ladies, looking out of her uncurtained window from some garret-height in her obscure dwelling, often arrested my attention, and bowed my little knee in curtseying respect, when walking up the revered *close* with Bell Johnston, my young sister's nurse. She then told, how the lords of those ladies died in defence of the rights of Prince Charles; and that she had heard that the heads of some of them were yet to be seen stuck through with spikes, on a great bar, in the city of London; and that their ghosts haunted the spot, and never could be laid till those heads were given up, and sent back to Scotland, to be buried with their kindred.

These venerable ladies just spoken of, the still-honoured relics of a departed or dispossessed nobility, usually appeared in a plain but suitable attire to their age and remembered gentility; but I only saw their heads, coifed in a milk-white *mutch*, (that is, a close-crowned cap, tied under the chin;) or with a little black silk hood, covering their silver hairs. One, however, of these noble widows I remember to have seen more than once, nearer than from her window. She used to visit a family who lived in the square we inhabited; and I then remarked her as a person of great age, of a feeble step, but a majestic though

slender form ; dressed in a long tartan plaid, reaching from the top of her head to the sole of her foot, and clasped under the chin with a large brooch of some costly materials, for it sparkled as the sun shone on it. She walked with a short stick, and always unattended ; nevertheless, she was no less a personage than either the Duchess of Perth, Lady Galloway, or the Lady Lovatt : one of the three she was, but which I cannot now charge my memory to say undoubtingly ; having, at the time, heard so much about them all, I am now somewhat confused in my recollections respecting them individually.

But there was one interesting person, whom I chanced to meet in a most extraordinary manner, in the same little square, and about whose identity I am perfectly certain. However, I must premise, that the small enclosure here aggrandised with the title of a square did not contain more than seven houses ; built, not like the usual style of the old town for many families under one roof, but each to commodiously contain one family only : and my mother's comfortable abode there, long and low, stood singly at the head of the square ; almost occupying the whole of the space, being merely flanked on each side by an opening to the pleasant green banks I before mentioned, and from which a delightful view was commanded of the Frith of Forth. The distinguished Lord Elchies had lived in our house ; and other persons of note having inhabited those of our neighbours, no small respect was attached to our little square. It was bounded on one side, near to the gates of entrance, by a wall of the well-known High School of Edinburgh ; and from the privacy in which those seldom opened gates kept the square, the chil-

dren of its inhabitants were allowed, without any apprehension, to play by themselves on the grass-plot in its centre. Indeed, so very small a postern door was left open for common egress, that few strangers found their way in ; therefore, the appearance of any, when they did come, was the more likely to excite the notice even of a child.

One evening, as myself and my brother, who was then a flaxen-headed little fellow, dressed in kilt and tartans, were playing on the grass-plot just described, I saw a strange gentleman enter the postern ; and, while we continued at our amusement, we sometimes looked up to remark on him to each other, as he walked to and fro in the path-way beyond the grass : for he appeared very different from the usual order of gentlemen we had seen. He was a person of a slight figure, dressed in faded mourning, and with the extraordinary appendage to such a habit, of a plaid scarf tied round him in the military fashion. When he drew near, we saw that the scarf was much discoloured, and torn. He held a rose in his hand, to which at times he seemed earnestly talking. Sometimes he walked fast, sometimes slow ; but, as his step was feeble, a child might easily conclude he must be either ill or old, or perhaps both.

After a while, he sat down on a broken bar of the wooden railing which had formerly surrounded the grass-plot ; he took off his hat, wiped his forehead with a handkerchief, which he had taken from his bosom, after carefully placing his rose there. His hair was of silver whiteness ; and it reminded me of my dear, kind grandfather, who had not been long dead. My brother and I threw down the gowans we had been

gathering, and ran to him. Taking his hand, we asked him to go in with us to our mother, who would be glad to see him, as we were. I never shall forget that poor stranger's countenance and manner when we spoke to him thus, and hung by his hand; nor can I ever forget that hand, so small, so white, and soft, as I caressed it, in our beseechings that he would go in with us; for we saw tears stealing down his cheeks while, unanswering, he gazed upon us. Our young eyes looked with admiring pity upon his face. Its skin seemed soft as his hand, and was fair even to lily paleness, excepting where many small blue veins traversed his delicately turned chin. In short, every feature of that faded face had been moulded to beauty. The eyes, of a then dimmed azure, were sweet and penetrating; his grey hairs, or rather locks, of snow, hung scattered over them. There were no wrinkles on his brow, or on his cheek; but there was a marking — I know not what to call it — that told, youth was fled! Sorrow, too, had stamped its characters. Children as we were, we knew its signature; we had read it often on the brow nearest and dearest to us.

While we were still preferring our unavailing petitions, our mother herself discerned us and our companion from her parlour window, and, attracted by the extraordinary appearance of the stranger, came out herself and approached us. I met her eagerly, telling her of the poor gentleman's fatigue and tears, and yet refusal to go in and rest with her. She drew near, and her persuasions were soon successful. He rose languidly from the broken rail; my brother offered him his shoulder to lean on; he placed the little white hand there, and was led into the house. Seated in our par-

lour, while the refreshment my mother had ordered was spreading before him, his eyes roamed around the apartment, and fixed where my dear and lamented father's sword hung, over a large military sketch of the two armies' positions at the battle of Minden. When the servant left the room, my mother invited her guest to eat; but his attention could not be withdrawn from the objects on which he looked. While he was gazing there, my brother and I were prattling the history we had often heard of that battle; and telling how our mamma could show him some curious trophies of the victory, which had been found in a French prince's tent, and given to our dear papa next day.* The stranger smiled mournfully upon us, stroking our heads; then told my mother, with much agitation, that he had been a soldier in his youth.

“ I, too, fought, and *fell!*” cried he. “ In the year forty-five, I received a wound worse than death: I shall never recover from it!” He put his hand to his head, and looked so wildly, that our mother drew us instinctively towards her. He too promptly understood her apprehension. “ Kind lady,” said he, rising from his chair, “ I told your children I was unfit for any shelter but the wide heavens: yet my wound harms no one but myself.” He turned, and with a hurried step moved towards the door. His eye was then dry, but our mother's overflowed: memory, as well as pity, was then busy in her heart. “ You must not go, sir!” cried she. “ If I have undesignedly given

* This was the Prince de Soubise; a gallant officer, but so great a coxcomb that his soldiers called him *Madame*. Swords, pistols, powder-horns, cosmetics, perfumes, all were found mingled together in his tent, when entered by the British soldiers.

pain to the afflicted, my offence has been my punishment. Come back! the calamities of war have made me what you see me — a widow!”

The poor gentleman turned, and looked on my mother with a faint colour rising to his cheek; he bowed his head too, with an air of reverence. His hand was pressed close to his heart, and his lip quivered, yet he smiled. My mother has often said, she never could forget the anguish of that smile. “I cannot go back,” he replied: “I ought never to have come back anywhere. Sin should always be an outcast!” — “Nay, sir,” answered my mother, the followers of Prince Charles were unfortunate — might be mistaken; but their fidelity could not be a sin!”

While she was speaking, he became very pale; looking to the door and to the windows, as if he did not know from which to make his escape. Rather frightened, I hastened to open the door; he hurried towards it; then turned his eyes on my mother, with an expression of such long-seated woe that it went to her soul. He stopped at the door; and taking from out his waistcoat breast the rose I had seen him hide there, he put it into my hand. “There,” said he, “it is a white one! Keep it near your innocent heart; and when you look at it, night and morning, pray for him that once owned it!” With a sigh that seemed heaved from the very depth of his soul, he passed through the opened doorway. We heard his hasty steps over the paved floor of the passage, and then through the porch of the house-door. The latter usually stood open; the closed gates of the square being sufficient guard against intruders. My brother, with his kind little heart sympathising with the shows of some distress he could not

well understand, hovered at a distance, and watched him out of the square.

“Who can he be?” my mother said, as she dried her eyes, and laid the rose he had given to me upon her table. Enquiry amongst our neighbours could lead her to form no guess; but, some time afterwards, she was told by an old woman who came to sell salt at the door, (such being the regular venders of that article in Edinburgh, bringing it about in large baskets on their heads,) that a person answering to the description our servant gave of the stranger had been occasionally seen by her, wandering along the fields towards the town of an evening; and that she was sorry to say, an accident had happened to him by which he was likely to die.

In short, on one of those evenings, while crossing the Cannongate towards Holyrood House, his foot slipped on a stone, and he fell: at that instant a four-horse dray-cart, escaped from its owner, drove furiously over him. The fallen gentleman was taken up insensible, and conveyed, by some of the humane people about, to the city infirmary. One of the persons who assisted chanced to have been an old jacobite serjeant; and he recognised the plaid scarf, then covering the deathlike face of the stranger, to be the peculiar colours worn only by Prince Charles himself, when in Scotland. The common royal tartan of the Stuarts was of a distinctly different pattern. He whispered his observations to one of the hospital attendants, a friend of his own; and when the object of their joint particular interest was taken into a ward, and consigned to surgical care, it was discovered that not only a limb

was fractured, but two ribs broken, and — that the sufferer was a woman!

When she was told her dangerous state, and urged to reveal her name, she wrote with pencil on a piece of paper, “I have forfeited my name; — but send to the manse of * * * * : — those are there who will come to lay in a decent grave the last remains of an unhappy wanderer from their Christian care. This handwriting will explain to them who they are called upon to bury — and forget.”

The paper was sealed and despatched. The next day witnessed the arrival of a venerable minister and his aged sister. They acknowledged the sufferer to be their near relation; that for many years she had been visited with occasional fits of mental distraction; but she had never before strayed away from the deep seclusion in which, during all that time, she had hidden herself, until within the preceding fortnight; and then her alarmed friends were ceaselessly making every enquiry, when their search was so sadly terminated by the delivery of the note from the Edinburgh infirmary.

The old couple were conducted to the room of their dying relative, now, perhaps by the loss of blood, restored to her sanest state; and the meeting, we were told, drew tears from every body present. After many sufferings, from the varied consequences of this terrible accident, she died — with her pious kinsfolk praying over her. They closed her eyes; and the venerable old lady, after *streaking* the fair, emaciated corpse, wrapped it, first in a linen winding-sheet, and then in Prince Charles’s plaid. It was one he had worn

himself; and ever since he had folded it, one stormy night at sea, round her he loved, it had been the cherished covering of her too faithful, though penitent, and often distracted heart. Knowing this, the Christian hand which spread it there in death, felt, that He who said, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice!" and whose redeeming goodness had sealed the pardon of so true a Magdalen, would not count as sin this last act of sympathy with the melancholy tenderness of a fond woman's heart. The venerable minister, with many tears, silently acquiesced in what was done; and, on the night of the day in which their unhappy kinswoman was released from sorrow and suffering, they took her remains to their own home, and buried them in the manse burial-ground:—so slept Jeannie Cameron!

It may appear incredible to the generality of readers, that children of between six and eight years of age should have been so interested, as I have represented, in events like these. It is most probable, that children brought up with nothing about them but the cares, tuition, and indulgences of a nursery, would not even notice such things, did they chance to occur before them; for the minds of both young and old must be awakened to, and then habituated to certain feelings, before they can be excited in the sudden way I have described, by objects of distress. The orphans of younger brothers who have married women of more virtues than fortune, seldom know any thing of that restricting nursery care, which shuts up children from witnessing the casualties of life: they have to bestir their own selves from their cradles, and to share in every home scene that passes around them; and thus

their minds and their hearts attain an early culture,—the selfish principle is crushed, — and a quick sympathising sensibility is ever ready to start at the door. Something of this kind was the answer I returned, full twenty years ago, to Mr. Hastings (I mean the late Warren Hastings), when, on having read “The Scottish Chiefs,” and “Thaddeus of Warsaw,” he asked me how it was possible that a person, then so young as their author was, could have known so much of the human heart, and of human conduct, as those works described.

Though my earliest associations, it may be seen, were all in favour of “The Scottish Chiefs” being the first of my writings; yet having quitted Scotland while still a child, eager to read books, and little dreaming of ever writing one, the “Fairy Queen,” “Sidney’s Arcadia,” and other tales of English chivalry, soon took their share in dividing my admiration with the Scottish heroes, whom almost deifying tradition had taught me to worship. Sober history came in in good time to sift the wheat in this mingled growth of weeds and harvest; and my late Preface to the Standard Edition of “Thaddeus of Warsaw,” shows how the time-honoured names of Sobieski and his followers wrought on me first, to dare becoming myself a narrator of heroic deeds.

That work was written in London; surrounded by living characters, whose corresponding military fame seemed to hold me examples I need only copy, to produce all I wanted to pourtray. But “The Scottish Chiefs” was composed under very different circumstances. Our revered parent had retired with us into the country. She wisely took us from a world that

might have presented too many charms for young and ardent spirits, and which was then opening in many ways before us. In the quiet seclusion she chose, where we had then few acquaintance, recollections of the past could not but be our frequent amusement; and those of dear Scotland often presented themselves. We talked of our walks on the Calton Hill, then a vast green slope, with no other buildings breaking the line of its smooth and magnificent brow but Hume's monument on one part, and the astronomical observatory on another; then of our climbing the steeper heights of Arthur's seat, and of our awed visits to St. Anton's Well! — all haunted by the ever-inspiring images of William Wallace and his brother heroes; or, the not less interesting, though more modern remembrances, attached to the misfortunes of the house of Stuart, from unhappy Mary to her expatriated descendant, Charles Edward.

In these discourses, I often found myself again by the side of Luckie Forbes and her spinning-wheel, listening to the delightful hum of her legendary lore; and while I dwelt in recollection on all she had told me of the champion of Scotland, and on all I subsequently had read of him and his associates, whether in history, or in the old native poems of "Blinde Harrie" and "Barbour's Bruce," some of the earliest friends of my youth successively died — persons descended from the bravest and the best of those honoured associates; and, under the impulse of a votive sorrow, I conceived the idea of writing "The Scottish Chiefs."

It was composed and published within the year in which I first touched it; so entirely was my mind, and heart, and time, devoted to my subject. And how it

fared with a kind public, the postscript annexed to a former Preface of the work (both being reprinted here), will now gratefully repeat, in the year 1831.

J. P.

Esher.

PREFACE

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

To paint the portrait of one of the most complete heroes that ever filled the page of history, may be a bold, though I hope not a vain, design. The contemplation of virtue is an improving, as well as a delightful employment; and, however inadequate this picture may be, to represent its original—William Wallace of Scotland,—yet, that it is a copy of such excellence, will be merit in the eyes of those, who so love virtue, as to venerate even its shade.

I have spared no pains in consulting almost every writing extant, which treats of the sister kingdoms during the period of my narrative. It would be tedious to swell this page with a list of these authorities; but all who are intimate with our old British historians, must perceive, on reading the *Scottish Chiefs*, that in the sketch, which history would have laid down for the biography of my principal hero, I have made no addition, excepting where, time having made some erasure, a stroke was necessary to fill the space, and unite the outline. Tradition has been a great assistance to me in this respect. And for much valuable information on the subject, I am indebted to the *bard of Hope*, my friend Mr. Thomas Campbell; he who has so nobly mingled the poet's bays, with the laurels of his clan.

While tracing the characters of my personages in the Scottish annals, it was with infinite pleasure I recognised those virtues in the fathers, which had attached me to their posterity. Delighted with this most dear proof of kindred, I have fondly lingered over my work; re-enjoying, in its visionary scenes, hours fled to heaven: I have again dis-

coursed, and mingled my soul, with friends, whose nobility of spirit honoured the illustrious stems from which they sprung:— But, like the blossomed bough torn from its branch, they are gone; and spread fragrance in my path no more.

It is now a fashion, to contemn, as nonsense, even an honest pride in ancestry. But where is the Englishman, who is not proud of being the countryman of Nelson? Where the British sailor, that does not thirst to emulate his fame? If this sentiment be right, respect for noble progenitors cannot be wrong; for it proceeds from the same source,—the principle of kindred, of inheritance, and of virtue. Let the race of Douglas, or the brave line of the Percy, bear witness, whether the name they bear, be not as a mirror to show them what they ought to be; and to kindle in their hearts, the flame which burnt in their fathers? Happy is it for this realm, that the destiny which now unites the once contending arms of those brave families, has also consolidated their rival nations into one; and, by planting the heir of Plantagenet, and of Bruce, upon one throne, hath redeemed the peace of Britain, and fixed it on lasting foundations.

From the nature of my story, more agents have been used in its conduct, than I should have adopted, had it been a work of mere imagination.— But very few persons, wholly imaginary, have been introduced: and, wishing to keep as near historical truth as could be consistent with my plan, no intentional injustice has been committed against the characters of the individuals, who were real actors with the chief hero of the tale. The melancholy circumstance, which first excited him to draw his sword for Scotland, though it may be thought too much like the creation of modern romance, is recorded as a fact in the old poem of *Blind Harrie*. Other private events have been interwoven with the public subjects of these volumes; that the monotony of a continued series of warlike achievements might in some measure be lessened. Some notes are added, to confirm the historical incidents; but finding that were they all marked, such a plan would swell each volume beyond its proper size; in one word, I assure the reader, that I seldom lead him to any spot in Scotland, whither some writ-

ten or oral testimony respecting my hero, had not previously conducted myself. In the same spirit, being careful to keep to the line of chronology, I have not strayed from it in any instance, until my chief personages return from France; and then, my history being intended to be within the bounds of modern romance, rather than measured by the folios of Scudery, I found myself obliged to take some liberties with time and circumstance: for both of which offences, and particularly for the management of my catastrophe, I hope the historical, if he be also a *gentle* reader, will find no difficulty in forgiving me.

LONG DITTON,
December, 1809.

POSTSCRIPT

TO

A SUBSEQUENT EDITION.

IN dismissing this edition of the *Scottish Chiefs* from the press, its author will not deny herself the genuine pleasure of expressing her grateful sense of the generous candour with which so adventurous a work, from a female pen, has been so generally received. That among these liberal approvers are the people of her hero's nation,—the natives of the country in which she first drew the aliments of intellectual life,—cannot but afford a peculiar gratification to her heart: and she expresses her delight on this occasion, with the feelings of a child rejoicing in the approbation of a beloved parent.

While thus fondly recording the favourable sentiments of her own country, she has the satisfaction of adding similar suffrages from other lands; while, indeed, the immediate result from such an approval in one of those countries was quite unexpected by her, giving her the honour of sharing the distinction of literary banishment along with the great name of Madame de Staël.—The *Scottish Chiefs* was translated into the languages of the continent: she received from Vienna, Berlin, Wirtemberg, Petersburg, and Moscow, and even far distant India, letters of liberal criticism from persons of the highest names in rank and literature;—and, when the work was ready for publication in France, it was denounced by the order of Napoleon, as dangerous to the state, and commanded to be withheld or destroyed.

The widow of the brave and unfortunate General Moreau was the first that mentioned this prohibition to

the writer. There are many interesting events connected in the author's mind with this communication. It was made to her in the morning of a most remarkable day ; for a very few hours after Madame Moreau had been talking with her on the subject, and that young and lovely widow's full heart had drawn a sad parallel between her own lost hero and those commemorated by her friend, the author saw her on the platform of the balcony of the Pulteney Hotel, to witness, along with the Imperial family of Russia, then resident there, the public entry into London of Louis XVIII. on his restoration to be King of France. The writer of this, though she had not the honour of being on the same balcony, was so situated as to be able to observe all that passed there. The Grand Duchess Catharine of Russia and the Princess Charlotte of England stood together, after having embraced each other, on their meeting on the platform, amidst the welcoming shouts of the throng of people in the street. Both were simply but elegantly dressed ; both were in the bloom of youth, and full of joyous gaiety. Near them stood another Russian princess, also in the summer of her life, and equally animated. On the opposite side of the balcony sat our true British Princess Elizabeth, looking all kind-hearted gladness at the happy pageant that was about to pass. The Duke of Oldenberg, a pretty child, the son of the young Grand Duchess, was on Her Royal Highness's knee. Madame Moreau, in her deep widow's weeds, stood not far from her, leaning against the balustrade. When the procession came forward, and the open carriage which contained Louis stopped an instant under the balcony, to receive the congratulations of the Imperial and Royal party above, all waved their handkerchiefs, the Grand Duchess and the Princess Charlotte kissing their hands to the gratefully bowing head of the Duchess d'Angoulême, whose pale cheek and emaciated form bore too evident marks of her trying destiny up to that hour. She smiled : all smiled, excepting the recently desolated widow of Moreau ; and she, indeed, leaned over the railing towards the carriage, and waved her white handkerchief ; but the writer of this saw the heavy tears rolling down her cheeks in

actual showers, and fall upon the top of the balustrade in large drops, leaving it wet with them.

But a sadder memorial hangs over that scene. In the course of a very few years afterwards, not one of those young and blooming persons, royal and noble, who stood there, the hope and admiration of many loyal and attached hearts, were existing on this earth! — The Grand Duchess Catharine died at Wirtemberg, then its queen; the other Russian princess followed the same early call, at St. Petersburg; Madame Moreau closed her widowed sorrows at Paris; and our own Princess Charlotte — all England knows how it lost her. Even the young Duke of Oldenberg is no more! — And the sole remaining one, who looked in that extraordinary moment from that balcony, filled with youth and beauty, and tenderly beating hearts, is our Princess Elizabeth, the most senior of them all; who, after becoming the Landgravine of Hesse Homberg, has, herself, returned a widow to her country; which is, indeed, happy to receive back the honoured mourner. But the awful events ended not there: the royal object of that great day's pageant is, himself, gone to another world; and the Duchess d'Angouleme, again driven from the throne of her ancestors, has once more become a hopeless exile! Thus, then, it is proved, that death and sorrow know no respect of persons.

Immediately on the Emperor Napoleon's abdication, and the restoration of the Bourbons to France, the interdicted translation of "The Scottish Chiefs" was published in Paris; and the translator, in his preface, gave an account of its recent prohibition.

It seems hardly credible that the same victor, who, when he came forward, with pretensions at least, to redeem Poland to independence, quoted the words of her hero Sobieski, by way of a noble excitement, should, and not many years afterwards, put an interdict on the very same sentiments, when expressed by her "Scottish Chiefs," in his own empire of France. But the difference in his language, lies in his relative circumstances. He wished to cajole, one people; and he determined to hold in subjection the other. We know that with conquerors, who usually fight for

power rather than justice, the use of certain sentiments springs more from expediency than principle. Real principle is proved in the result ; — a true patriot establishes the liberty of his country, without infringing on the rights of others ; a pretender, first founds a despotic empire over his own countrymen, and then leads them to put similar chains on their neighbours.

To draw the line between such characters ; to place high, chivalric loyalty, and the spirit of patriotic freedom, on just principles, whether in the breast of prince or peasant ; the writer of this tale has studied the page of many a history ; has studied the lesson in many a noble heart. — With humility, as to the execution of her task ; but with due confidence in its matter and object, she proceeded — from *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, to *The Scottish Chiefs*. — And so would do, henceforward, on whatever ground she might take her stand to labour in the cause. — Sir Philip Sidney, a true hero of her own country, early gave her this text, — “ Let who may, make the laws of a people, (said he,) allow me to write their ballads, and I’ll guide them at will ! ” — What ballads were to the sixteenth century, romances are to ours ; the constant companions of young people’s leisure hours ; biassing them to virtue, or misleading them to vice. And, to inspire the most susceptible period of man’s existence, his youth, with the principles which are to be his future staff, — and their effects, his “ exceeding great reward,” is the motive of my pen. — Hence, in proportion to the great view of the aim, must be the satisfaction derived, when the approbation of the wise and of the good has pronounced the attempt worthy its intention.

J. P.



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THE
SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

CHAPTER I.

SCOTLAND.

BRIGHT was the summer of 1296.—The war which had desolated Scotland was then at an end. Ambition seemed satiated; and the vanquished, after having passed under the yoke of their enemy, concluded they might wear their chains in peace. Such were the hopes of those Scottish noblemen who, early in the preceding spring, had signed the bond of submission to a ruthless conqueror: purchasing life at the price of all that makes life estimable, — liberty and honour.

Prior to this act of vassalage, Edward I. of England had entered Scotland at the head of an immense army. He seized Berwick by stratagem; laid the country in ashes; and, on the field of Dunbar, forced the Scottish king, and his nobles, to acknowledge him their liege lord.

But while the courts of Edward, or of his representatives, were crowded by the humbled Scots, the spirit of one brave man remained unsubdued. Disgusted alike at the facility with which the sovereign of a warlike nation could resign his people and his crown into the hands of a treacherous invader, and at the pusillanimity of the nobles who had ratified the sacrifice, William Wallace retired to the glen of Ellerslie. Withdrawn from the world, he hoped to avoid the sight of oppressions he could not redress, and the endurance of injuries beyond his power to avenge.

Thus checked at the opening of life in the career of glory that was his passion,—secluded in the bloom of manhood from the social haunts of men,—he repressed the eager aspirations of his mind, and strove to acquire that resignation to inevitable evils, which alone could reconcile him to forego the promises of his youth ; and enable him to view with patience a humiliation of Scotland, which blighted her honour, menaced her existence, and consigned her sons to degradation or obscurity. The latter was the choice of Wallace. Too noble to bend his spirit to the usurper, too honest to affect submission, he resigned himself to the only way left of maintaining the independence of a true Scot ; and giving up the world at once, all the ambitions of youth became extinguished in his breast, since nothing was preserved in his country to sanctify their fires. Scotland seemed proud of her chains. Not to share in such debasement, appeared all that was now in his power ; and within the shades of Ellerslie, he found a retreat, and a home, whose sweets beguiling him of every care, made him sometimes forget the wrongs of his country, in the tranquil enjoyments of wedded love.

During the happy months of the preceding autumn, while Scotland was yet free, and the path of honourable distinction still open before her young nobility, Wallace married Marion Braidfoot, the beautiful heiress of Lamington. Nearly of the same age, and brought up from childhood together, reciprocal affection had grown with their growth ; and sympathy of taste and virtues, and mutual tenderness, made them so entirely one, that when at the age of twenty-two, the enraptured lover was allowed to pledge that faith, publicly at the altar, which he had so often vowed in secret to his Marion, he clasped her to his heart, and softly whispered, —“ Dearer than life ! part of my being ! blessed is this union, that mingles thy soul with mine, now, and for ever !”

Edward’s invasion of Scotland broke in upon their innocent joys. Wallace threw aside the wedding garment, for the cuirass and the sword. But he was not permitted long to use either :—Scotland submitted to her enemies ; and he had no alternative but to bow to her op-

pressors ; or, to become an exile from man, amid the deep glens of his country.

The tower of Ellerslie was henceforth the lonely abode of himself and his bride. The neighbouring nobles avoided him, because the principles he declared were a tacit reproach on their proceedings ; and in the course of a short time, as he forbore to seek them, they even forgot that he was in existence. Indeed, all occasions of mixing with society he now rejected. The hunting-spear, with which he had delighted to follow the flying roe-buck from glade to glade ; the arrows with which he used to bring down the heavy termagan, or the towering eagle, all were laid aside. Scottish liberty was no more ; and Wallace would have blushed to have shown himself to the free-born deer of his native hills, in communion of sports with the spoilers of his country. Had he pursued his once favourite exercises, he must have mingled with the English, now garrisoned in every town, and who passed their hours of leisure in the chase.

Being resigned to bury his youth, — since its strength could no longer be serviceable to his country, — books, his harp, and the sweet converse of his tender Marion, became the occupations of his days. Ellerslie was his hermitage ; and there, closed from the world, with an angel his companion, he might have forgotten Edward was lord in Scotland, had not that which was without his little paradise made a way to its gates, and showed him the slavery of the nobles, and the wretchedness of the people. In these cases, his generous hand gave succour, where it could not bring redress. Those whom the lawless plunderer had driven from their houses, or stripped of their covering, found shelter, clothing, and food, at the house of Sir William Wallace.

Ellerslie was the refuge of the friendless, and the comfort of the unhappy. Wherever Lady Wallace moved, — whether looking out from her window on the accidental passenger, or taking her morning or moonlight walks through the glen, leaning on the arm of her husband, — she had the rapture of hearing his steps greeted, and followed, by the blessing of the *poor destitute*, and the prayers of

them who *were ready to perish*. It was then that this happy woman would raise her husband's hand to her lips, and, in silent adoration, thank God for blessing her with a being made so truly in his own image.

Several months of this blissful, and uninterrupted solitude had elapsed, when Lady Wallace saw a chieftain at her gate. He enquired for its master—requested a private conference—and retired with him into a remote room. They remained together for an hour. Wallace then came forth, and ordering his horse, with four followers, to be in readiness, said he meant to accompany his guest to Douglas castle. When he embraced his wife at parting, he told her that as Douglas was only a few miles distant, he should be at home again before the moon rose.

She passed the tedious hours of his absence with tranquillity, till the appointed signal of his return appeared from behind the summits of the opposite mountains. So bright were its beams, that Marion did not need any other light to show her the stealing sands of her hour-glass, as they numbered the prolonged hours of her husband's stay. She dismissed her servants to their rest; all, excepting Halbert, the grey-haired harper of Wallace; and he, like herself, was too unaccustomed to the absence of his master, to find sleep visit his eyes while Ellerslie was bereft of its joy and its guard.

As the night advanced, Lady Wallace sat in the window of her bed-chamber, which looked towards the west. She watched the winding pathway, that led from Lanark down the opposite heights; eager to catch a glimpse of the waving plumes of her husband, when he should emerge from behind the hill, and pass under the thicket which overhung the road. How often, as a cloud obscured for an instant the moon's light, and threw a transitory shade across the path, did her heart bound with the thought that her watching was at an end! It was he whom she had seen start from the abrupt rock! They were the folds of his tartan, that darkened the white cliff! but the moon again rolled through her train of clouds, and threw her light around. Where then was her Wallace? Alas! it was only a shadow she had seen! the hill was still lonely, and he whom she

sought was yet far away ! Overcome with watching, expectation, and disappointment ; unable to say whence arose her fears ; she sat down again to look, but her eyes were blinded with tears ; and in a voice interrupted by sighs, she exclaimed, “ Not yet, not yet !— Ah, my Wallace, what evil hath betided thee ? ”

Trembling with a nameless terror, she knew not what to dread. She believed that all hostile rencontres had ceased, when Scotland no longer contended with Edward. The nobles, without remonstrance, had surrendered their castles into the hands of the usurper ; and the peasantry, following the example of their lords, had allowed their homes to be ravaged, without lifting an arm in their defence. Opposition being over, nothing could then threaten her husband from the enemy ; and was not the person who had taken him from Ellerslie a friend ?

Before Wallace's departure, he had spoken to Marion alone ; he told her, that the stranger was Sir John Monteith, the youngest son of the brave Walter Lord Monteith*, who had been treacherously put to death by the English, in the early part of the foregoing year. This young man was bequeathed, by his dying father, to the particular charge of his friend William Lord Douglas, at that time governor of Berwick. After the fall of that place, and the captivity of its defender, Sir John Monteith had retired to Douglas castle, in the vicinity of Lanark ; and was now the sole master of that princely residence ; James Douglas, the only son of its veteran lord, being still at Paris ; whither he had been despatched, before the defeat at Dunbar, to negotiate a league between the French monarch and the then King of Scots.

Informed of the privacy in which Wallace wished to live, Monteith had never ventured to disturb it until this day ; but knowing the steady honour of his old school-companion, he came to entreat him, by the respect he en-

* Walter Stewart, the father of Sir John Monteith, assumed the name and earldom of Monteith in right of his wife, the daughter and heiress of the preceding earl. When his wife died, he married an Englishwoman of rank ; who, finding him ardently attached to the liberties of his country, cut him off by poison ; and was rewarded by the enemies of Scotland for this murder, with the hand of an ancestor of the dukes of Bedford.

tertained for the brave Douglas, and by his love for his country, that he would not refuse to accompany him to the brave exile's castle.

"I have a secret to disclose to you," said he, "which cannot be divulged on any other spot."

Unwilling to deny so small a favour, Wallace, as has been said before, consented; and accordingly was conducted by Monteith towards Douglas.

While descending the heights which lead to the castle, Monteith kept a profound silence; and when crossing the drawbridge, towards it, he put his finger to his lips, in token to the servants for equal caution. This was explained as they entered the gate, and looked around. It was guarded by English soldiers. Wallace would have drawn back; but Monteith laid his hand on his arm, and whispered, "For your country!" At these words, a spell to the ear of Wallace, he proceeded; and his attendants followed into the court-yard.

The sun was just setting, as Monteith led his friend into the absent earl's room. Its glowing reflection on the distant hills, reminded Wallace of the stretch he had to re-tread, to reach his home before midnight; and thinking of his anxious Marion, he awaited with impatience the developement of the object of his journey.

Monteith closed the door, looked fearfully around for some time; then, trembling at every step, approached Wallace. When drawn quite near, in a low voice he said, "You must swear upon the cross, that you will keep inviolate the secret I am going to reveal."

Wallace put aside the hilt of the sword, which Monteith presented, to receive his oath:—"No," said he, with a smile; "in these times, I will not bind my conscience, on subjects I do not know. If you dare trust the word of a Scotsman and a friend, speak out; and, if the matter be honest, my honour is your pledge."

"You will not swear?"

"No."

"Then I must not trust you."

"Then our business is at an end," returned Wallace, rising, "and I may return home."

“ Stop !” cried Monteith. “ Forgive me, my old companion, that I have dared to hesitate ! These are, indeed, times of such treason to honour, that I do not wonder you should be careful how you swear. But the nature of the confidence reposed in me, will, I hope, convince you that I ought not to share it rashly. Of any one but you, whose truth stands unsullied, amidst the faithlessness of the best, I would exact oaths on oaths ; but your word is given, and on that I rely. Await me here.”

Monteith unlocked a door, which had been concealed by the tapestry, and, after a short absence, re-entered with a small iron box. He set it on the table near his friend ; then went to the great door, which he had before so carefully closed, tried that the bolts were secure ; and returned, with a still more pallid countenance, towards the table. Wallace, surprised at so much precaution, and at the extreme apprehension visible in these actions, awaited with wonder the promised explanation. Monteith sat down, with his hand on the box, and fixing his eyes on it, began :—

“ I am going to mention a name, which you may hear with patience, since its power is no more.— The successful rival of Bruce, and the enemy of your family, is now a prisoner in the Tower of London.”

“ Baliol ?”

“ Yes,” answered Monteith ; “ and his present sufferings will, perhaps, avenge to you, his vindictive resentment of the injury he received from Sir Ronald Crawford.”

“ My grandfather never injured him, nor any man !” interrupted Wallace : “ Sir Ronald Crawford was as incapable of injustice, as of flattering the minions of his country’s enemy. But Baliol is fallen, and I forgive him.”

“ Did you witness his degradation,” returned Monteith, “ you would even pity him.”

“ I always pity the wicked,” continued Wallace :— “ and, as you seem ignorant of the cause of his enmity against Sir Ronald and myself, in justice to the character of that most venerable of men, I will explain it. I first saw Baliol four years ago, when I accompanied my grand-

father, to witness the arbitration of the king of England between the two contending claimants for the Scottish crown. Sir Ronald came on the part of Bruce. I was deemed too young to have a voice in the council ; but I was old enough to understand what was passing there ; and to perceive, in the crouching demeanour with which Baliol received the crown, that it was the price for which he sold his country. However, as Scotland acknowledged him sovereign, and as Bruce submitted, my grandfather silently acquiesced. But Baliol did not forget former opposition. His behaviour to Sir Ronald and myself, at the beginning of this year, when, according to the privilege of our birth, we appeared in the field against the public enemy, fully demonstrated what was the *injury* Baliol complains of ; and how unjustly he drove us from the standard of Scotland. ‘None,’ said he, ‘shall serve under me, who presumed to declare themselves the friends of Bruce.’ Poor weak man ! The purchased vassal of England ; yet so vain of his ideal throne, he hated all who had opposed his elevation, even while his own treachery sapped its foundation ! Edward having made use of him, all these sacrifices of honour and of conscience are insufficient to retain his favour ; and Baliol is removed from his kingdom to an English prison ! Can I feel any thing so honouring, as indignation, against a wretch so abject ? — No ! I do indeed pity him. And now that I have cleared my grandfather’s name of such calumny, I am ready to hear you further.”

Monteith, after remarking on the well-known honour of Sir Ronald Crawford, resumed.

“ During the massacre at the capture of Berwick, Lord Douglas, wounded, and nearly insensible, was taken by a trusty band of Scots out of the citadel and town. I followed him to Dunbar, and witnessed with him that day’s dreadful conflict ; which completed the triumph of the English. When the few nobles who survived the battle dispersed, Douglas took the road to Forfar ; hoping to meet King Baliol there, and to concert with him new plans of resistance. When we arrived, we found his Majesty in close conversation with the Earl of Athol ; who had persuaded him, the disaster at Dunbar was decisive ; and

that if he wished to save his life, he must immediately go to the king of England, then at Montrose, and surrender himself to his mercy.*

“Douglas tried to alter Baliol’s resolution, but without effect. The King could not return any reasonable answers to the arguments which were offered to induce him to remain, but continued to repeat, with groans and tears, ‘It is my fate.’ Athol sat knitting his black brows during this conversation; and, at last throwing out some sullen remarks to Lord Douglas, on exhorting the King to defy his liege lord, he abruptly left the room.

“As soon as he was gone, Baliol rose from his seat with a very anxious countenance, and taking my patron into an adjoining room, they continued there a few minutes, and then re-entered. Douglas brought with him this iron box. ‘Monteith,’ said he, ‘I confide this to your care.’ Putting the box under my arm, and concealing it with my cloak—‘Carry it,’ continued he, ‘directly to my castle in Lanarkshire. I will rejoin you there, in four-and-twenty hours after your arrival. Meanwhile, by your affection for me, and fidelity to your king, breathe not a word of what has passed.’

“‘Look on that, and be faithful!’ said Baliol, putting this ruby ring on my finger. I withdrew, with the haste his look dictated; and, as I crossed the outward hall, was met by Athol. He eyed me sternly, and enquired whither I was going. I replied, ‘To Douglas, to prepare for the coming of its lord.’ The hall was full of armed men in Athol’s colours. Not one of the remnant who had followed my patron from the bloody field of Dunbar, was visible. Athol looked round on his myrmidons: ‘Here,’ cried he, ‘see that you speed this fellow on his journey. We shall provide lodgings for his master.’ I foresaw danger to Lord Douglas, but I durst not attempt to warn him of it; and to secure my charge, which a return to the room might have hazarded, I hastened into the court-yard; and being permitted to mount my horse, set off on full speed.

“On arriving at this place, I remembered that secret

* This treacherous Scot, who persuaded Baliol to his ruin, was John Cummin of Strathbogie, Earl of Athol in right of his wife, the heiress of that earldom.

closet, and carefully deposited the box within it. A week passed, without any tidings of Lord Douglas. At last a pilgrim appeared at the gate, and requested to see me alone; fearing nothing from a man in so sacred a habit, I admitted him. Presenting me with a packet, which had been intrusted to him by Lord Douglas, he told me my patron had been forcibly carried on board a vessel at Montrose, to be conveyed with the unhappy Baliol to the Tower of London. Douglas, on this outrage, sent to the monastery at Aberbrothick, and under a pretence of making a religious confession before he sailed, begged a visit from the superior. 'I am that prior,' continued the pilgrim; 'and having been born on the Douglas lands, he well knew the claim he had to my fidelity. He gave me this packet, and conjured me to lose no time in conveying it to you. The task was difficult; and, as in these calamitous seasons we hardly know who to trust, I determined to execute it myself.'

"I enquired whether Lord Douglas had actually sailed. 'Yes,' replied the father, 'I stood on the beach, till the ship disappeared.'"

A half-stifled groan burst from the indignant breast of Wallace. It interrupted Monteith for an instant; but, without noticing it, he proceeded.

"Not only the brave Douglas was then wrested from his country, with our King, but also that holy pillar of Jacob*, which prophets have declared to be the palladium of Scotland!"

"What?" enquired Wallace, with a yet darker frown; "has Baliol robbed Scotland of that trophy of one of her best kings? Is the sacred gift of Fergus to be made the spoil of a coward?"

"Baliol is not the robber," rejoined Monteith: "the hallowed pillar was taken from Scone, by the command of

* The tradition respecting this stone is as follows:—Hiber, or Iber, the Phœnician, who came from the Holy Land, to inhabit the coast of Spain, brought this sacred relic along with him. From Spain he transplanted it with the colony he sent to people the south of Ireland; and from Ireland it was brought into Scotland by the great Fergus, the son of Ferchard. He placed it in Argyleshire; but Mac-Alpine removed it to Scone, and fixed it in the royal chair in which all the succeeding kings of Scotland were inaugurated. Edward I. of England caused it to be carried to Westminster Abbey, where it now stands. The tradition is, that empire abides, where it stays.

the King of England ; and with the sackings of Iona, was carried on board the same vessel with the betrayed Douglas. The archives of the kingdom have also been torn from their sanctuary, and were thrown by Edward's own hands into the fire."

" Tyrant !" murmured Wallace, " thou may'st fill the cup too full !"

" His depredations," continued Monteith, " the good monk told me, have been wide, as destructive. He has not left a parchment, either of public records or of private annals, in any of the monasteries or castles around Montrose ; all have been searched and plundered. And, besides, the faithless Earl of March, and Lord Soulis, are such parricides of their country, as to have performed the like robberies, in his name, from the eastern shores of the Highlands to the farthest of the Western Isles." *

" Do the traitors think," cried Wallace, " that by robbing Scotland of her annals, and of that stone, they really deprive her of her palladium ? Scotland's history is in the memories of her sons ; her palladium is in their hearts ; and Edward may one day find that she remembers the victory of Largs †, and needs not talismans to give her freedom."

" Alas ! not in our time !" answered Monteith. " The spear is at our breasts, and we must submit. You see this castle is full of Edward's soldiers ! Every house is a garrison for England,—but more of this by-and-by ; I have yet to tell you the contents of the packet which the monk brought. It contained two others. One directed to Sir James Douglas at Paris, and the other to me. I read as follows : —

" Athol has persuaded Baliol to his ruin, and betrayed me into the hands of Edward. I shall see Scotland no more. Send the enclosed to my son at Paris ; it will inform him what is the last wish of William Douglas, for his

* It is not necessary to remind the reader of the authorities whence these notorious facts are drawn, as there is not a British historian silent on the subject.

† This battle was fought by Alexander III. on the 1st of August, 1263, against Acho, King of Norway. That monarch invaded Scotland with a large army, and drew up his forces before Largs, a town in Ayrshire. He met with a great defeat, and, covered with disgrace, retired to his own country.

country. The iron box I confided to you, guard as your life, until you can deposit it with my son. But should he remain abroad, and you ever be in extremity, commit the box in strict charge to the worthiest Scot you know; and tell him, *that it will be at the peril of his soul, who dares to open it, till Scotland be again free!* When that hour comes, then let the man by whose valour God restores her rights, receive the box as *his own*; for by him only is it to be opened.

DOUGLAS.’”

Monteith finished reading the letter, and remained silent. Wallace, who had listened to it with increasing indignation against the enemies of Scotland, spoke first:—“Tell me, in what I can assist you; or how serve these last wishes of the imprisoned Douglas?”

Monteith replied, by reading over again this sentence,—“‘Should my son remain abroad, and you ever be in extremity, commit the box in strict charge to the worthiest Scot you know.’—I am in that extremity now. Edward, determined on desolation, when he placed English governors throughout our towns; and the rapacious Heselrigge, his representative in Lanark, not backward to execute the despot’s will, has just issued an order, for the houses of all the absent chiefs to be searched for records, and secret correspondencies. Two or three in the neighbourhood, have already gone through this ordeal; but the event has proved, that it was not papers they sought, but plunder; and an excuse for dismantling the castles, or occupying them with English officers.

“The soldiers, you saw, were sent, by day-break this morning, to guard this castle, until Heselrigge could in person be present at the examination! This ceremony is to take place to-morrow; and as Lord Douglas is considered a traitor to Edward, I am told the place will be sacked to its walls. In such *an extremity*, to you, noble Wallace, as to *the worthiest Scot I know*, I apply, to take charge of this box. Within the remote cliffs of Ellerslie, it must be safe; and when James Douglas arrives from Paris, to him you will resign it. Meanwhile, as I cannot resist the plunderers, after delivering the keys of the state apartments to Heselrigge to-morrow, I shall

submit to necessity, and beg his permission to retire to my lodge on Ben Venu."

Wallace made no difficulty in granting Monteith's request; and, there being two iron rings on each side of his charge, the young chief took off his leathern belt, and putting it through them, swung the box easily under his left arm, while covering it with his plaid.

Monteith's eyes now brightened, — the paleness left his cheek, — and with a firmer step, as if suddenly relieved of a heavy load, he called a servant, to prepare Sir William Wallace's attendants.

While Wallace shook him by the hand, Monteith, in a low and solemn voice, exhorted him to caution respecting the box: "Remember," added he, "the penalty that hangs over him who looks into it."

"Be not afraid," answered Wallace; "even the outside shall never be seen by other eyes than my own; unless the same circumstance, which now induces you, *mortal extremity*, should force me to confide it to safer hands."

"Beware of that!" exclaimed Monteith; "for who is there that would adhere to the prohibition, as I have done — as you will do? and, besides, as I have no doubt it contains holy relics, who knows what new calamities a sacrilegious look might bring upon our already devoted country?"

"Relics or no relics," replied Wallace, "it would be an equal sin against good faith to invade what is forbidden: but, from the weight, I am rather inclined to suspect it contains gold; probably a treasure, with which the sordid Baliol thinks to compensate the hero, who may free his country, for all the miseries a traitor king, and a treacherous usurper, have brought upon it."

"A treasure!" repeated Monteith; "I never thought of that; — it is, indeed, heavy! — and, as we are responsible for the contents of the box, I wish we were certain of what it contains; let us consider that!"

"It is no consideration of ours," returned Wallace. "With what is in the box, we have no concern: all we have to do, is to preserve the contents unviolated by even our own eyes; and to that, as you have now transferred the charge to me, I pledge myself: — farewell."

“ But why this haste ? ” rejoined Monteith ; “ indeed, I wish I had thought —— stay, only a little.”

“ I thank you,” returned Wallace, proceeding to the court-yard ; “ but it is now dark, and I promised to be at home before the moon rises. If you wish me to serve you farther, I shall be happy to see you at Ellerslie to-morrow. My Marion will have pleasure in entertaining, for days or weeks, the friend of her husband.”

While Wallace spoke, he advanced to his horse, to which he was lighted by the servants of the castle. A few English soldiers lingered about in idle curiosity. As he put his foot in the stirrup, he held the sword in his hand, which he had unbuckled from his side, to leave space for his charge. Monteith, whose dread of detection was ever awake, whispered, “ Your loosened weapon may excite suspicion ! ” Fear incurred what it sought to avoid. He hastily pulled aside Wallace’s plaid, to throw it over the glittering hilt of the sword, and thus exposed the iron box. The light of the torches, striking upon the polished rivets, displayed it to all lookers on, but no remark was made. Wallace, not observing what was done, again shook hands with Monteith, and calling his servants about him, galloped away. A murmur was heard, as if of some intention to follow him ; but deeming it prudent to leave the open and direct road, because of the English marauders who swarmed there, he was presently lost amid the thick shades of Clydesdale.

CHAPTER II.

LANARK.

THE darkness was almost impenetrable. Musing on what had passed with Monteith, and on the little likelihood of any hero appearing, who, by freeing his country, could ever claim the privilege of investigating the mystery which was now his care, Wallace rode on ; till crossing the bridge of Lanark, he saw the rising moon silver the tops

of the distant hills ; and then his meditations embraced a gentler subject. This was the time he had promised Marion he should be returned, and he had yet five long miles to go, before he could reach the glen of Ellerslie ! He thought of her being alone — of watching, with an anxious heart, the minutes of his delay. Scotland and its wrongs he now forgot, in the idea of her whose happiness was dearer to him than life. He could not achieve the deliverance of the one, but it was his bliss to preserve the peace of the other ; and putting spurs to his horse, under the now bright beams of the moon he hastened through the town.

Abruptly turning an angle leading to the Mouse river, a cry of murder arrested his ear. He checked his horse, and listened. The clashing of arms told him the sound had issued from an alley to the left. He alighted in an instant, and drawing his sword, threw away the scabbard ; (prophetic omen !) then, leaving his horse with one of his servants, hastened, with the other three, to the spot whence the noise proceeded.

On arriving, he discovered two men in tartans, with their backs to the opposite wall, furiously assaulted by a throng of Edward's soldiers. At this sight, the Scots who accompanied Wallace were so enraged that, blowing their bugles to encourage the assailed, they joined hand to hand with their gallant leader, and attacking the banditti, each man cut his opponent to the ground.

Such unexpected assistance, re-animated the drooping strength of one of the two, from whom the cry had issued. He sprung from the wall with the vigour of a tiger ; but at the moment, received a wound in his back, which would have thrown him at the feet of his enemies, had not Wallace caught him in his left arm, and with his right cleared the way, while he cried to his men who were fighting near him — " To the Glen ! " As he spoke, he threw the now insensible stranger into their arms. The other man, whose voice had first attracted Wallace, at that instant sunk, covered with blood, on the pavement.

Two of the servants, obeying their master, carried their senseless burden towards the horses ; but the third, being

hemmed in by the furious soldiers, could not move. Wallace made a passage to his rescue, and effected it ; but one base wretch, while the now wounded Scot was retreating, made a stroke which would have severed his head from his body, had not the trusty claymore* of Wallace struck down the pending weapon of the coward, and received his rushing body upon its point. He fell with bitter imprecations, calling aloud for vengeance.

A dreadful cry was now raised by the whole band of assassins : — “ Murder ! — treason ! — Arthur Heselrigge is slain ! ” The uproar became general. The windows of the adjoining houses were thrown open ; people armed, and unarmed, issued from their doors, and pressed forward to enquire the cause of the alarm. Wallace was nearly overpowered ; a hundred swords flashed in the torchlight ; but at the moment he expected they would be sheathed in his heart, the earth gave way under his feet, and he sunk into utter darkness.

He fell upon a quantity of gathered broom ; and concluding that the weight of the thronging multitude had burst his way through the arch of a cellar, he sprung on his feet : and though he heard the curses of several wretches, who had fallen with him, and fared worse, he made but one step to a half-opened door, pointed out to him by a gleam from an inner passage. The men uttered a shout, as they saw him darken the light which glimmered through it ; but they were incapable of pursuit ; and Wallace, aware of his danger, darting across the adjoining apartment, burst open a window, and leaped out at the foot of the Lanark hills.

The oaths of the soldiers, enraged at his escape, echoed in his ears, till distance sunk them into hoarse murmurs. He pursued his way over the craigs ; through the valley, and across the river, to the cliffs which embattle the garden of Ellerslie. Springing on the projecting point of the nearest, he leaped into a thicket of honey-suckles. This was the favourite bower of his Marion ! The soft perfume, as it saluted his senses, seemed to breathe peace and

* Claymore, an ancient Scottish sword.

safety ; and as he emerged from its fragrant embrace, he walked with a calmer step towards the house. He approached a door, which led into the garden. It was open. He beheld his beloved, leaning over a couch, on which was laid the person he had rescued. Halbert was dressing his wounds.

Wallace paused for a moment, to contemplate his lovely wife, in this more lovely act of charity. Her beautiful hands held a cup to the lips of the stranger ; while her long hair, escaped from its band, fell in jetty ringlets, and mingled with his silver locks.

“ Marion ! ” exclaimed the overflowing soul of her husband. She looked up at the well-known sound, and with a cry of joy rushing forward, threw herself into his arms : her tears flowed, she sobbed — she clung to his breast. It was the first time Wallace had been from her ; she had feared it would have been the last. The hour — the conflict — the bleeding stranger ! But now he was returned — he was safe !

“ Art thou indeed here ? ” exclaimed she. — Blood fell from his forehead, upon her face and bosom ; “ O my Wallace ! ” cried she, in agony.

“ Fear not, my love ! all is well, since our wounded countryman is safe.”

“ But you bleed ! ” returned she. — No tears now impeded her voice. Terror had checked their joyful currents ; and she felt as if she expected the life-blood to issue from the wound on which she gazed.

“ I hope my preserver is not hurt ? ” enquired the stranger.

“ Oh, no,” replied Wallace, putting back the hair from his forehead ; “ a mere trifle ! ” — That the action had discovered the gash to be wider than he thought, he saw in the countenance of his wife ! She turned deadly pale. “ Marion,” said he, “ to convince you how causeless your fears are, you shall cure me yourself ; and with no other surgery than your girdle ! ”

When Lady Wallace heard his gay tone, and saw the unforced smiles on his lips, she took courage ; and, remembering the deep wounds of the stranger, which she

had just assisted to dress, without any alarm for his life, she began to hope that she need not now fear for the object dearest to her in existence. Rising from her husband's arms, with a languid smile she unbound the linen fillet from her waist; and Halbert having poured some balsam into the wound, she prepared to apply the bandage; but when she lifted her husband's hair from his temple — that hair, which had so often been the object of her admiration, as it hung in shining masses over his arching brows! — when the clotted blood met her fingers, a mist seemed to pass over her sight: she paused for a moment; but rallying her strength, as the cheerful sound of his voice conversing with his guest, assured her fear was groundless, she tied the fillet; and, stealing a soft kiss on his cheek when she finished, seated herself, yet trembling, by his side.

“Gallant Wallace!” continued the stranger; agitation had prevented her hearing what had preceded this; “it is Donald Earl of Mar, who owes his life to you.”

“Then blest be my arm,” exclaimed Wallace, “that has preserved a life so precious to my country!”

“May it indeed be blest!” cried Lord Mar; “for this night it has made the Southrons* feel, there is yet one man in Scotland, who does not fear to resist oppression, and to punish treachery.”

“What treachery?” enquired Lady Wallace, her alarmed spirit still hovering about her soul's far dearer part: “is any meant to my husband?”

“None to Sir William Wallace, more than to any other brave Scot,” replied the earl: “but we all see the oppression of our country; we all know the treachery, by which it was subjugated; and this night, in my own person, I have felt the effects of both. The English, at Lanark, despatched a body of men to Bothwell castle (where my family now are), on a plea, that as its lord is yet absent, they presume he is adverse to Edward; and, therefore, they must search his dwelling for documents to settle the point. Considering myself the representative of my brother-in-law, Lord Bothwell; and suspecting that this might be only a

* Southrons and Saxons were the common appellations with which the Scots denominated the invading armies of Edward I.: — they were chiefly composed of Irish, and Welsh, and foreigners.

private marauding party, I refused to admit the soldiers ; and saw them depart, swearing to return the next day with a stronger force, and storm the castle. To be ascertained of their commission, and to appeal against such unprovoked tyranny, should it be true, I followed the detachment to Lanark.

“ I saw Heselrigge the governor.—He avowed the transaction ; but awed by the power which he thinks I possess in the country, he consented to spare Bothwell while I and my family remain in it. It being nearly dark, I took my leave, and was proceeding towards my servants in the court-yard, when a young man accosted me. I recognised him to be the officer who had commanded the party I had driven from the castle. Heselrigge having told me that he was his nephew, I made no hesitation to go back with him, when he informed me his uncle had forgotten something of importance, and begged me to return. I followed his steps ; but instead of conducting me to the room in which I had conversed with Heselrigge, he led me along a dark passage into a small apartment, where, telling me his uncle would attend me, he suddenly retreated out of the door, and before I could recollect myself I heard him bolt it after him.

“ I now saw myself a prisoner ; and, alarmed at what might be intended to my defenceless family, I made every essay to force the door, but it was in vain. Driven to despair, I remained in a state of mind not to be described, when the bolt was undrawn, and two men entered, with manacles in their hands. They attempted to seize me, telling me I was the prisoner of King Edward. I did not listen further, but wounding one with my dagger, felled the other to the ground ; and, darting past him, made my way through what passages I cannot tell, till I found myself in a street leading from behind the governor’s house. I ran against some one as I rushed from the portal ; it was my servant Neil. I hastily told him to draw his sword and follow me. We then hurried forward ; he telling me, he had stepped out to observe the night, while the rest of my men were awaiting me in the house, wondering at my delay.

“ Rejoiced at my escape, and fearing the worst of consequences from the treachery of Heselrigge, I was hastening onward ; determined to pursue my way on foot to the protection of my family, when, at the turning of an angle which leads to the Bothwell road, we were suddenly surrounded by armed men. The moon shone full on their faces, and I discovered they were Southrons, and that young Heselrigge was at their head.

“ He aimed a blow at my head with his battle-axe, and in a voice of triumph exclaimed to his soldiers, ‘ The plunder of Bothwell, my lads ! Down with its lord ! all but pretty Helen, shall be yours ! ’

“ In a moment every sword was directed towards me. They wounded me in several places ; but the thought of my daughter gave supernatural vigour to my arm, and I defended myself till the cries of my servant brought you, my brave deliverer, to my rescue. But, while I am safe, perhaps my treacherous pursuer has marched towards Bothwell, too sure to commit the horrid violence he meditates : there are none to guard my child but a few domestics, the unpractised sword of my stripling nephew, and the feeble arms of my wife.”

“ Be easy on that head,” interrupted Wallace : “ I believe the infamous leader of the banditti fell by my hand, for the soldiers made an outcry that Arthur Heselrigge was killed ; and then pressing on me to take revenge, their weight broke a passage into a vault, through which I escaped — ”

“ Save, save yourself, my master ! ” cried a man rushing in from the garden. “ You are pursued — ”

While he spoke, he fell insensible at Wallace’s feet. It was Dugald — whom he had rescued from the blow of Heselrigge, and who, from the state of his wound, had been thus long in reaching Ellerslie.

Wallace had hardly time to give him to the care of Halbert, when the voice of war assailed his ears. The tumult of men demanding admittance, and the terrific sound of spears rattling against the shields of their owners, told the astonished group within that the house was beset by armed foes.

“Blood for blood!” cried a horrid voice, which penetrated the almost palsied senses of Lady Marion. “Vengeance on Wallace, for the murder of Heselrigge!”

“Fly, fly!” cried she, looking wildly at her husband.

“Whither?” answered he, supporting her in his arms. “Would this be a moment to leave you, and our wounded guest? I must meet them.”

“Not now,” cried Lord Mar. “Hear you not, how numerous they are? Mark that shout! they thirst for blood. If you have love, pity, for your wife, delay not a moment. Again —”

The uproar redoubled, and the room was instantly filled with shrieking women, in their night-clothes, the attendants of Lady Wallace. She lay, almost expiring, on her husband’s breast.

“O my lord!” cried the terrified creatures, wringing their hands, “what will become of us! The Southrons are at the gates, and we shall be lost for ever.”

“Fear not,” replied Wallace; “retire to your chambers. I am the person they seek: none else will meet with injury.”

Appeased by this assurance, the women retreated to their apartments; and Wallace, turning to the Earl, who continued to enforce the necessity of his flight, repeated, that he would not consent to leave his wife in such a tumult.

“Leave me,” cried she, in an inarticulate voice; “or see me die.”

As she spoke there was a violent crash, and a tremendous burst of imprecations. Three of Wallace’s men ran panting into the room. Two of the assailants had climbed to the hall window; and had just been thrown back upon the cliffs, where one was killed. “Conceal yourself,” said the Scots to Wallace; “for, in a few minutes more, your men will not be able to maintain the gates.”

“Yes, my dear lord,” cried Halbert, “there is the dry well at the end of the garden; at the bottom of that you will be safe.”

“By your love for me, Wallace — by all you owe to the tender affections of your grandfather, hearken to him!” cried Lady Marion, falling at his feet, and clasping his

knees. "I kneel for my life in kneeling for yours! Pity the grey hairs of Sir Ronald, whom your untimely death would bring to the grave! Pity your unborn child! Fly, Wallace, fly, if you would have me live!" She was pale and breathless.

"Angel of my life!" exclaimed Wallace, straining her to his heart, "I obey thee. But if the hand of one of these desperate robbers dares to touch thy hallowed person —"

"Think not so, my lord," interrupted Halbert: "it is you they seek. Not finding you, they will be too eager in pursuit to molest your lady."

"I shall be safe," whispered Marion; "only fly. While you are here, their shouts kill me."

"But thou shalt go with me," returned he, "the well will contain us all. But first let our faithful Halbert, and these honest fellows, lower Lord Mar into the place of refuge. He being the cause of the affray, if discovered, would be immediately sacrificed."

Lord Mar acquiesced; and while the contention was so loud without as to threaten the tearing down of the walls, the Earl was carried into the garden. He was followed by Sir William Wallace, to whose arm his wife yet fondly clung. At every cry of the enemy, at every shock they gave to his yet impregnable gates, she breathed the shorter, and was clasped by the lord of her heart still more closely to his bosom.

At the well-side, they found the Earl bound with the rope that was to lower him to the bottom. By great care it was safely done; and the cord being brought up again, before it was tied round Wallace (for his agonised wife insisted he should descend next), he recollected that the iron box at his side might hurt the wounded nobleman by striking him in his descent; and, unbuckling it, he said it contained matters of great value, and ordered it to be lowered first.

Lord Mar, beneath, was releasing it from the rope, when a shout of triumph pierced their ears. A party of the English, having come round the heights, had leaped the wall of the garden, and were within a few yards of the

well. For Wallace to descend now was impossible. "That tree!" whispered Marion, pointing to an oak near which they stood. As she spoke she slid from his arms, and, along with the venerable Halbert, who had seized her hand, disappeared amid the adjoining thicket. The two servants fled also.

Wallace finding himself alone, the next instant, like one of his native eagles, was looking down from the towering top of the wood upon his enemies. They passed beneath him, denouncing vengeance upon the *assassin of Arthur Heselrigge!* One, who by the brightness of his armour seemed to be their leader, stopped under the tree, and complained he had so sprained his ankle in leaping the wall, he must wait a few minutes to recover himself. Several soldiers drew towards him; but he ordered them to pursue their duty, search the house, and bring Wallace, dead or alive, before him.

They obeyed; but others, who had gained admittance to the tower through the now forced gates, soon ran to him, with information that the murderer could no where be found.

"But here is a *gay ladie,*" cried one; "perhaps she can tell of his hiding-place." And at that moment Marion, with Halbert, appeared amongst a band of men. The lighted torches, which the soldiers held, shone full on her face. Though pale as monumental marble, the exquisite beauty of her features, and the calm dignity which commanded from her eyes, awed the officer into respect and admiration.

"Soldiers, stand back!" cried he: advancing to Lady Wallace, "Fear not, madam." As the words passed his lips a flight of arrows flew into the bosom of the tree. A piercing shriek from Marion was her only answer. "Hah! my lady's falcon!" cried Halbert, alarmed, every way, for the fate of his master. A sudden agitation of the branches having excited an indefinite suspicion in a body of archers who stood near, with one impulse they had discharged their arrows to the spot. Halbert's ready excuse, both for the disturbance in the tree and his lady's shriek, was prompted and warranted true by the appearance of a large bird, which

the rushing of the arrows had frightened from her nest: she rose suddenly from amongst the branches, and soared away, far to the east, with loud screams.

All being again still, Marion hoped that her husband had escaped any serious injury from the arrows; and turning with recovered composure to the officer, heard him, with a glow of comfort, reprimand his men for daring to draw their bows without his orders. Then addressing her, "I beg your pardon, madam," said he, "both for the alarm these hot-headed men have occasioned you, and for the violence they have committed in forcing one of your sex and beauty before me. Had I expected to have found a lady here, I should have issued orders to have prevented this outrage; but I am sent hither in quest of Sir William Wallace, who, by a mortal attack made on the person of the governor of Lanark's nephew, has forfeited his life. The scabbard of his sword, found beside the murdered Heselrigge, is an undeniable proof of his guilt. Direct us to find him; and not only release, but the favour of the English monarch, will await your allegiance."

"I am Sir William Wallace's wife," returned the gentle Marion, in a firm tone; "and by what authority you seek him thus, and presume to call him guilty, I cannot understand."

"By the authority of the laws, madam, which he has violated."

"What laws?" rejoined she; "Sir William Wallace acknowledges none but those of God, and his country.—Neither of these has he transgressed."

The officer replied, "This night he assassinated Arthur Heselrigge in the streets of Lanark; and that condemns him, by the last declaration of King Edward:—*Whatever Scot maltreats any one of the English soldiers, or civil officers, garrisoned in the towns of Scotland, shall thereby forfeit his life, as the penalty of his crime.*"

"A tyrant's law, sir, to which no free born Scot will submit! But even were it allowed by my countrymen, in this case it can have no hold on my husband. That he is a Scot he glories; and not that he maltreated any Englishman in the streets of Lanark, do I glory; but because,

when he saw two defenceless men, borne down by a band of armed soldiers, he exposed his unshielded breast in their defence ! one of the two died, covered with wounds. That the governor's nephew also fell, was a just retribution for his heading so unequal a contest, and no crime in Sir William Wallace ; for he slew him to preserve a feeble old man, who had a hundred English swords levelled at his life."

The officer paused for a moment, and then ordering his soldiers to fall farther back, when they were at a sufficient distance, he offered to take Lady Wallace's hand. She withstood his motion with a reserved air, and said, " Speak, sir, what you would say, or allow me to retire."

" I mean not to offend you, noble lady," continued he ; — " had I a wife, lovely as yourself, and I in like circumstances, I hope, in the like manner, she would defend my life and honour. — I knew not the particulars of the affair in which Arthur Heselrigge fell, till I heard them from your lips. I can easily credit them, for I know his unmanly character. Wallace is a Scot ; and acted in Scotland, as Gilbert Hambleton would have done in England, were it possible for any vile foreigner, to there put his foot upon the neck of a countryman of mine. — Wherever you have concealed your husband, let it be a distant asylum. At present, no track within the jurisdiction of Lanark, will be left unsearched, by the governor's indefatigable revenge."

Lady Wallace, overcome with gratitude at this generous speech of the English officer, uttered some inarticulate words, expressive, more in sound, than clearness, of her grateful feelings. — Hambleton continued : — " I will use my influence with Heselrigge, to prevent the interior of your house being disturbed again ; but it being in the course of military operations, I cannot free you from the disagreeable ceremony of a guard being placed to-morrow morning round the domains. — This, I know, will be done to intercept Sir William Wallace, should he attempt to return."

" O ! that he were indeed far distant !" thought the anxious Marion. The officer then added : — " However, you shall be relieved of my detachment directly." And as

he spoke, he waved his sword to them who had seized the harper. They advanced, still holding their prisoner. He ordered them to commit the man to him, and to sound. The trumpeter obeyed; and in a few seconds the whole detachment were assembled before their commander.

“Soldiers!” cried he; “Sir William Wallace has escaped our hands. Mount your horses, that we may return to Lanark, and search the other side of the town. Lead forth, and I will follow.”

The troops obeyed; and falling back through the opened gates, left Sir Gilbert Hambledon alone with Lady Wallace, and the wondering Halbert. The brave young man took the now no longer withdrawn hand of the grateful Marion, who had stood trembling, while so many of her husband’s mortal enemies were assembled under the place of his concealment.

“Noble Englishman,” said she, as the last body of soldiers passed from her sight. “I cannot enough thank you, for this generous conduct! but, should you, or yours, be ever in the like extremity with my beloved Wallace; (and in these tyrannous times, what brave spirit can answer for its continued safety?) may the ear which has heard you this night, at that hour repay my gratitude!”

“Sweet lady,” answered Hambledon, “I thank you for your prayer. God is indeed the benefactor of a true soldier; and though I serve my King and obey my commanders, yet it is only to the Lord of battles that I look for a sure reward. And whether he pay me here, with victories and honours, or take my soul through a rent in my breast, to receive my laurel in paradise, it is all one to Gilbert Hambledon.—But the night is cold: I must see you safe within your own doors; and then, lady, farewell!”

Lady Wallace yielded to the impulse of his hand, and with redoubled haste, as she heard another rustling in the tree above her head. Hambledon did not notice it; but desiring Halbert to follow, in a few minutes disappeared with the agitated Marion into the house.

Wallace, whose spirit could ill brook the sight of his domains filled with hostile troops, and the wife of his

bosom brought a prisoner before their commander, would instantly have braved all dangers, and have leaped down amongst them ; but at the instant he placed his foot on a lower bough to make a spring, the courteous address of Hambledon to his wife had made him hesitate. He listened to the replies of his Marion with exultation ; and when the Englishman ordered his men to withdraw, and delivered himself so generously respecting the safety of the man he came to seize, Wallace could hardly prevent a brave confidence in such virtue, from compelling him to come from his concealment, and thank his noble enemy on the spot. But a consideration that such disclosure would put the military duty, and the generous nature of the officer, at variance, he desisted with such an agitation of spirits, that the boughs had again shook under him, and re-awakened the alarm of his trembling wife.

“ Omnipotent Virtue !” exclaimed Wallace to himself ; “ if it were possible that thy generous spirit could animate the breast of an invading conqueror, how soon would the vanquished cease to forget their former freedom, and learn to love their vassalage !— This man’s nobleness, how soon has it quenched the flame of vengeance, with which, when I ascended this tree, I prayed for the extirpation of every follower of Edward !”

“ Sir William ! my master !” cried a well-known voice, in a suppressed tone, as if still fearful of being overheard. It was Halbert’s. “ Speak, my dear lord ; are you safe ?”

“ In heart and body !” returned Wallace, sliding from the tree, and leaping on the ground : — “ One only of the arrows touched me ; and that merely striking my bugle, fell back amongst the leaves. I must now hasten to the dearest, the noblest of women !”

Halbert begged him to stay, till they should hear the retreat from the English trumpets. “ Till their troops are out of sight,” added he, “ I cannot believe you safe.”

“ Hark !” cried Wallace ; “ the horses are now descending the craig. That must satisfy you, honest Halbert.” With these words he flew across the lawn, and entering the house, met the returning Marion, who had just bade

farewell to Hambleton. — She rushed into his arms, and with the excess of a disturbed and uncertain joy, fainted on his neck. Her gentle spirit had been too powerfully excited by the preceding scenes. Unaccustomed to tumult of any kind, and nursed in the bosom of fondness, till now, no blast had blown on her tender form, no harshness had ever ruffled the blissful serenity of her mind. What then was the shock of this evening's violence! Her husband, pursued as a murderer; herself, exposed to the midnight air, and dragged by the hands of merciless soldiers to betray the man she loved! All these scenes were new to her: and though a kind of preternatural strength had supported her through them, yet when the cause of immediate exertion was over; when she fell once more into her husband's extended arms, she seemed there to have found again her shelter, and the pillow whereon her harassed soul might repose.

“My life! my best treasure! preserver of thy Wallace! look on him!” exclaimed he: “bless him with a smile from those dear eyes.”

His voice, his caresses, soon restored her to sensibility and recollection. She wept on his breast, and with love's own eloquence, thanked heaven that he had escaped the search, and the arrows of his enemies.

“But my dear lady,” interrupted Halbert; “remember, my master must not stay here. You know the English commander said, he must fly far away. — Nay, spies may even now be lurking to betray him.”

“You are right,” cried she. “My Wallace, you must depart. Should the guard arrive soon, your flight may be prevented. You must go now: — but, oh, whither?”

“Not very distant, my love. — In going from thee, I leave behind all that makes life precious to me; how then can I go far away? No; there are recesses amongst the Cartlane craigs, I discovered while hunting, and which I believe have been visited by no mortal foot but my own. There will I be, my Marion, before sunrise; and before it sets, thither must you send Halbert, to tell me how you fare. Three notes from thine own sweet strains of *Thusa*

ha measg na reultan mor *, blown by his pipe, shall be a sign to me that he is there ; and I will come forth, to hear tidings of thee."

" Ah, my Wallace, let me go with thee !"

" What, dearest," returned he, " to live amidst rocks and streams ! to expose thy tender self, and thine unborn infant, to all the accidents of such a lodging !"

" But are not you going to so rough, so dangerous a lodging ?" asked she : " O ! would not rocks and streams be heaven's paradise to me, when blessed with the presence of my husband ? Ah ! let me go !"

" Impossible, my lady," cried Halbert ; afraid that the melting heart of his master would consent : " you are safe here ; and your flight would awaken suspicion in the English, that he had not gone far. — Your ease and safety are dearer to him than his own life ; and most likely by his cares to preserve them, he would be traced ; and so fall a ready sacrifice to the enemy."

" It is true, my Marion ; I could not preserve you in the places to which I go."

" But the hardships you will endure !" cried she ; " to sleep on the cold stones ; with no covering but the sky, or the dripping vault of some dreary cave ! I have not courage to abandon you alone, to such cruel rigours."

" Cease, my beloved !" interrupted he, " cease these groundless alarms. Neither rocks nor storms have any threats to me. It is only tender woman's cares that make man's body delicate. Before I was thine, my Marion, I have lain whole nights upon the mountain's brow, counting the wintry stars, as I impatiently awaited the hunter's horn that was to recall me to the chase in Glenfinlass. Alike to Wallace is the couch of down, or the bed of heather ; so, best beloved of my heart, grieve not at hardships which were once my sport, and will now be my safety."

" Then farewell ! May good angels guard thee !" Her voice failed ; she put his hand to her lips.

* *Thusa ha measg na reultan mor*, &c. are the beginning words of an old Gaelic ditty, the English of which runs thus : —

Thou who art amid the stars move to thy bed with music, &c.

“Courage, my Marion,” said he, “remember that Wallace lives but in thee. Revive, be happy for my sake; and God, who putteth down the oppressor, will restore me to thine arms.” She spoke not, but rising from his breast, clasped her hands together, and looked up with an expression of fervent prayer; then smiling through a shower of tears, she waved her hand to him to depart, and instantly disappeared into her own chamber.

Wallace gazed at the closed door, with his soul in his eyes. To leave his Marion thus; to quit her, who was the best part of his being; who seemed the very spring of the life, now throbbing in his heart; was a contention with his fond, fond love, almost too powerful for his resolution. Here indeed his brave spirit gave way; and he would have followed her, and perhaps have determined to await his fate at her side, had not Halberty reading his mind in his countenance, taken him by the arm, and drawn him towards the portal.

Wallace soon recovered his better reason; and obeying the friendly impulse of his servant, accompanied him through the garden, to the quarter which pointed towards the heights that lead to the remotest recesses of the Clyde. In their way they approached the well where Lord Marlay. Finding that the Earl had not been enquired for, Wallace deemed his stay to be without peril; and intending to inform him of the necessity which still impelled his own flight he called to him, but no voice answered. He looked down, and seeing him extended on the bottom, without motion, “I fear,” said he, “the Earl is dead. As soon as I am gone, and you can collect the dispersed servants, send one into the well to bring him forth; and if he be indeed no more, deposit his body in my oratory, till you can receive his widow’s commands respecting his remains. The iron box, now in the well, is of inestimable value. Take it to Lady Wallace, and tell her, she must guard it, as she has done my life; but not to look into it, at the peril of what is yet dearer to her — my honour.”

Halbert promised to adhere to his master’s orders: and Wallace girding on his sword, and taking his hunting spear (with which the care of his venerable domestic had

provided him), he pressed the faithful hand that presented it; and again enjoining him to be watchful of the tranquillity of his lady; and to be with him in the evening, near the Corie Lin; he climbed the wall, and was out of sight in an instant.

CHAPTER III.

ELLERSLIE.

HALBERT returned to the house; and entering the room softly, into which Marion had withdrawn, beheld her on her knees before a crucifix: she was praying for the safety of her husband.

“May he, O gracious Lord,” cried she, “soon return to his home. But if I am to see him here no more, O may it please thee to grant me to meet him within thy arms in heaven!”

“Hear her, blessed son of Mary!” ejaculated the old man. She looked round, and rising from her knees, demanded of him, in a kind but anxious voice, whether he had left her lord in security.

“In the way to it, my lady!” answered Halbert. He repeated all that Wallace had said at parting: and then tried to prevail on her to go to rest. “Sleep cannot visit my eyes this night, my faithful creature,” replied she; “my spirit will follow Wallace in his mountain-flight. Go you to your chamber. After you have had repose, that will be time enough to revisit the remains of the poor Earl, and to bring them with the box to the house. I will take a religious charge of both, for the sake of the dear intruder.”

Halbert persuaded his lady to lie down on the bed, that her limbs at least might rest after the fatigue of so harassing a night; and she, little suspecting that he meant to do otherwise than to sleep also, kindly wished him repose, and retired.

Her maids, during the late terror, had dispersed, and were no where to be found. And the men, too, after their

stout resistance at the gates had all disappeared : some fled, others were sent away prisoners to Lanark, while the good Hambleton was conversing with their lady. Halbert, therefore, resigned himself, to await with patience the rising of the sun, when he hoped some of the scared domestics would return ; if not, he determined to go to the cotters who lived in the depths of the glen, and bring some of them to supply the place of the fugitives.

Thus musing, he sat on a stone-bench in the hall, watching anxiously the appearance of that orb, whose setting beams he hoped would light him back with tidings of Sir William Wallace to comfort the lonely heart of his lady. All seemed at peace. Nothing was heard but the sighing of the trees as they waved before the western window, which opened towards the Lanark hills. The morning was yet grey ; and the fresh air blowing in rather chilly, Halbert rose to close the wooden shutter ; at that moment his eyes were arrested by a party of armed men in quick march down the opposite declivity. In a few minutes more, their heavy steps sounded in his ears, and he saw the platform before the house filled with English. Alarmed at the sight of such a host, although he expected a guard would arrive, he was retreating across the apartment towards his lady's room, when the great hall door was burst open by a band of soldiers, who rushed forward and seized him.

“ Tell me, dotard !” cried their leader, a man of low stature, with grey locks, but a fierce countenance ; “ where is the murderer ? Where is Sir William Wallace ? Speak, or the torture shall force you.”

Halbert trembled, but it was for his defenceless lady, not for himself. — “ My master,” said he, “ is far from this.”

“ Where ?”

“ I know not.”

“ Thou shalt be made to know, thou hoary headed villain !” cried the same violent interrogator. “ Where is the assassin's wife ? I will confront ye — seek her out.”

At that word the soldiers parted right and left ; and in a moment afterwards, three of them appeared with shouts, bringing in the unhappy Marion.

“ Oh, my lady !” cried Halbert, struggling to approach her, as with terrified apprehension she looked around her. But they held her fast ; and he saw her led up to the merciless wretch, who had given the orders to have her summoned.

“ Woman,” cried he, “ I am the governor of Lanark. You now stand before the representative of the great King Edward ; and on your allegiance to him, and on the peril of your life, I command you to answer me three questions. Where is Sir William Wallace, the murderer of my nephew ? Who is that old Scot, for whom my nephew was slain ? He and his whole family shall meet my vengeance ! And tell me, where is that box of treasure, which your husband stole from Douglas castle ? Answer me these questions, on your life.”

Lady Wallace remained silent.

“ Speak, woman !” demanded the governor. “ If fear cannot move you, know that I can reward as well avenge. I will endow you richly, if you declare the truth. If you persist to refuse, you die.”

“ Then I die,” replied she, scarcely opening her half closed eyes, as she leaned, fainting and motionless, against the soldier who held her.

“ What !” cried the governor, stifling his rage, in hopes to gain by persuasion, on a spirit, he found threats could not intimidate ; “ can so gentle a lady reject the favour of England, large grants in this country, and perhaps a fine English knight for a husband, when you might have all for the trifling service of giving up a traitor to his liege lord, and confessing where his robberies lie concealed ? — Speak, fair dame ; give me this information, and the lands of the wounded chieftain, whom Wallace brought here, with the hand of the handsome Sir Gilbert Hambleton, shall be your reward. Rich, and a beauty in Edward’s court ! Lady, can you now refuse to purchase all, by declaring the hiding place of the traitor Wallace ?”

“ It is easier to die.”

“ Fool !” cried Heselrigge, driven from his assumed temper by her steady denial : “ What ! is it easier for these dainty limbs to be hacked to pieces by my soldiers’ axes ?

Is it easier for that fair bosom to be trodden under foot by my horses' hoofs ; and for that beauteous head of thine to decorate my lance ? — Is all this easier than to tell me where to find a murderer and his gold ?”

Lady Wallace shuddered : she stretched her hands to heaven : “ Blessed Virgin, to thee I commit myself !”

“ Speak, once for all !” cried the enraged governor, drawing his sword ; “ I am no waxen-hearted Hambleton, to be cajoled by your beauty. Declare where Wallace is concealed, or dread my vengeance.”

The horrid steel gleamed across the eyes of the unhappy Marion : unable to sustain herself, she sunk on the ground.

“ Kneel not to me for mercy,” cried the infuriate wretch ; “ I grant none, unless you confess your husband's hiding place.”

A momentary strength darted from the heart of Lady Wallace to her voice. “ I kneel to Heaven alone ; and may it ever preserve my Wallace from the fangs of Edward and his tyrants !”

“ Blasphemous wretch !” cried the infuriate Heselrigge, and in that moment he plunged his sword into her defenceless breast. Halbert, who had all this time been held back by the soldiers, could not believe that the fierce governor would perpetrate the horrid deed he threatened ; but, seeing it done, with a giant's strength, and a terrible cry, he burst from the hands which held him, and had thrown himself on the bleeding Marion, before her murderer could strike his second blow. However, it fell, and pierced through the neck of the faithful servant, before it reached her heart. She opened her dying eyes, and seeing who it was that would have shielded her life, just articulated — “ Halbert ! my Wallace — to God —” and with the last unfinished sentence, her pure soul took its flight to regions of eternal peace.

The good old man's heart almost burst, when he felt that before-heaving bosom now motionless ; and groaning with grief, and fainting with loss of blood, he sunk senseless on her body.

A terrible stillness was now in the hall. Not a man spoke ; all stood, looking on each other, with a stern horror

marking each pale countenance. Heselrigge, dropping his blood-stained sword on the ground, perceived by the behaviour of his men that he had gone too far; and fearful of arousing the indignation of awakened humanity, to some act against himself, he addressed the soldiers in an unusual accent of condescension: "My friends," said he, "we will now return to Lanark. To-morrow you may come back; for I reward your services of this night with the plunder of Ellerslie."

"May a curse light on him who carries a stick from its grounds!" exclaimed a veteran, from the farther end of the hall. "Amen!" murmured all the soldiers, with one consent; and falling back, they disappeared, one by one, out of the great door, leaving Heselrigge alone with the old soldier, who stood leaning on his sword, looking on the murdered lady.

"Grimsby, why stand you there?" demanded Heselrigge: "follow me."

"Never," returned the soldier.

"What!" exclaimed the governor, momentarily forgetting his panic; "dare you speak thus to your commander? March on before me, this instant, or expect to be treated as a rebel."

"I march at your command no more," replied the veteran, eyeing him resolutely: "the moment you perpetrated this bloody deed, you became unworthy the name of man; and I should disgrace my own manhood, were I ever again to obey the word of such a monster!"

"Villain!" cried the enraged Heselrigge, "you shall die for this!"

"That may be," answered Grimsby, "by the hands of some tyrant like yourself: but no brave man, not the royal Edward, would do otherwise than acquit his soldier, for refusing obedience to the murderer of an innocent woman. It was not so he treated the wives and daughters of the slaughtered Saracens, when I followed his banners over the fields of Palestine!"

"Thou canting miscreant!" cried Heselrigge, springing on him suddenly, and aiming his dagger at his breast. But the soldier arrested the weapon; and, at the same instant,

closing upon the assassin, with a turn of his foot, threw him to the ground. Heselrigge, as he lay prostrate, seeing his dagger in his adversary's hand, with the most dastardly promises implored for life.

“ Monster ! ” cried the soldier, “ I would not pollute my honest hands with such unnatural blood. Neither, though thy hand has been lifted against my life, would I willingly take thine. It is not rebellion against my commander, that actuates me, but hatred of the vilest of murderers. I go far from you, or your power : but if you forswear your voluntary oath, and attempt to seek me out for vengeance, remember, it is a soldier of the cross, you pursue ! and a dire retribution shall be demanded by Heaven, at a moment you cannot avoid, and, with a horror commensurate with your crimes.”

There was a solemnity, and a determination in the voice and manner of the soldier, that paralysed the intimidated soul of the governor : he trembled violently ; and repeating his oath of leaving Grimsby unmolested, at last obtained his permission to return to Lanark. The men, in obedience to the conscience-struck orders of their commander, had mounted their horses, and were now far out of sight. Heselrigge's charger was still in the court-yard. He was hurrying towards it ; but the soldier, with a prudent suspicion, called out, “ Stop, sir ! you must walk to Lanark. The cruel are generally false ; I cannot trust your word, should you have the power to break it : leave this horse here : to-morrow you may send for it. I shall then be far away.”

Heselrigge saw that remonstrance would be unavailing ; and shaking with fear, and impotent rage, he turned into the path which, after five weary miles, would lead him once more to his citadel.

From the moment the soldier's manly spirit had dared to deliver its abhorrence of Lady Wallace's murder, he was aware that his life would no longer be safe within reach of the machinations of Heselrigge ; and determined, alike by detestation of him, and regard for his own preservation, he resolved to take shelter in the mountains, till he could have

an opportunity of going beyond sea, to join his king's troops in the Guienne wars.

Full of these thoughts he returned into the hall. As he approached the bleeding group on the floor, he perceived it move; hoping that perhaps the unhappy lady might not be dead, he drew near; but, alas! as he bent to examine, he touched her hand, and found it quite cold. The blood, which had streamed from the now exhausted heart, lay congealed upon her arms and bosom. Grimsby shuddered. Again he saw her move; but it was not with her own life; the recovering senses of her faithful servant, as his arms clung around the body, had disturbed the remains of her who would wake no more.

On seeing that existence yet struggled in one of these blameless victims, Grimsby did his utmost to revive the old man. He raised him from the ground, and poured some strong liquor out of his flask into his mouth. Halbert breathed freer; and his kind surgeon, with the venerable harper's own plaid, bound up the wound in his neck. Halbert opened his eyes; when he fixed them on the rough features, and English helmet of the soldier, he closed them again with a deep groan.

"My honest Scot," said Grimsby, "trust in me. I am a man like yourself; and though a Southron, am no enemy to age and helplessness."

The harper took courage at these words: he again looked at the soldier; but suddenly recollecting what had passed, he turned his eyes towards the body of his mistress, on which the beams of the now rising sun were shining. He started up, and staggering towards it, would have fallen, had not Grimsby supported him. "O what a sight is this!" cried he, wringing his hands: "My lady! my lovely lady! see how low she lies, who was once the delight of all eyes, the comforter of all hearts." The old man's sobs suffocated him. The veteran turned away his face; a tear dropped upon his hand. "Accursed Heselrigge," ejaculated he, "thy fate must come!"

"If there be a man's heart in all Scotland, it is not far distant!" cried Halbert. "My master lives, and will

avenge this murder. You weep, soldier ; and you will not betray what has now escaped me."

" I have fought in Palestine," returned he, " and a soldier of the cross betrays none who trust him. Saint Mary preserve your master, and conduct you safely to him. We must both hasten hence. Heselrigge will surely send in pursuit of me. He is too vile to forgive the truth I have spoken to him ; and should I fall into his power, death is the best I could expect at his hands. Let me assist you to put this poor lady's remains into some decent place ; and then, my honest Scot, we must separate."

Halbert, at these words, threw himself upon the bosom of his mistress, and wept with loud lamentations over her. In vain he attempted to raise her in his feeble arms. " I have carried thee scores of times in thy blooming infancy," cried he ; " and now must I bear thee to thy grave ? I had hoped that my eyes would have been closed by this dear hand." As he spoke, he pressed her cold hand to his lips, with such convulsive sobs, that the soldier fearing he would expire in the agony of his sorrow, took him almost motionless from the dead body, and exhorted him to suppress such self-destroying grief for the sake of his master. Halbert gradually revived ; and listening to him, cast a wishful look on the lifeless Marion.

" There sleeps the pride and hope of Ellerslie, the mother with her child !—O, my master, my widowed master," cried he, " what will comfort thee !"

Fearing the ill consequence of further delay, the soldier again interrupted his lamentations, with arguments for flight ; and Halbert, recollecting the oratory in which Wallace had ordered the body of Lord Mar to be deposited, named it for that of his dead lady. Grimsby, immediately wrapping the beauteous corse in the white garments which hung about it, raised it in his arms ; and was conducted by Halbert to a little chapel in the heart of a neighbouring cliff.

The still weeping old man removed the altar ; and Grimsby, laying the shrouded Marion upon its rocky platform, covered her with the pall, which he drew from the holy table, and laid the crucifix upon her bosom. Halbert,

when his beloved mistress was thus hidden from his sight, threw himself on his knees beside her, and in the vehement language of grief, offered up a prayer for her departed soul.

“Hear me, righteous Judge of heaven and earth!” cried he; “as thou didst avenge the blood of innocence shed in Bethlehem, so let the grey hairs of Heselrigge be brought down in blood to the grave, for the murder of this innocent lady!” Halbert kissed the cross; and rising from his knees, went weeping out of the chapel, followed by the soldier.

Having closed the door, and carefully locked it; absorbed in meditation, of what would be the agonised transports of his master, when he should tell him these grievous tidings, Halbert proceeded in silence, till he and his companion, in passing the well, were startled by a groan.

“Here is some one!” cried the soldier. “Is it possible he lives?” exclaimed Halbert, bending down to the edge of the well, with the same enquiry. “Yes,” feebly answered the Earl; “I still exist, but am very faint.—If all be safe above, I pray remove me from this dismal place.” Halbert replied, that it was indeed necessary he should ascend immediately; and lowering the rope, told him to tie the iron box to it, and then himself. This done, with some difficulty, and the assistance of the wondering soldier, (who now expected to see the husband of the unfortunate Lady Wallace emerge, to the knowledge of his loss,) he at last effected the Earl’s release. For a few seconds the fainting nobleman supported himself on his countryman’s shoulder, while the fresh morning air gradually revived his exhausted frame. The soldier looked at his grey locks and furrowed brow, and marvelled how such appendages of age could belong to the man, whose resistless valour had discomfited the fierce determination of Arthur Heselrigge and his myrmidons. However, his doubts of the veteran before him being other than the brave Wallace, were soon removed by the Earl himself, who asked for a draught of the water which trickled down the opposite hill. Halbert went to bring it; and while he was absent, Lord Mar raised his eyes to enquire for Sir William and the Lady Marion. He started

when he saw English armour on the man he would have accosted, and rising suddenly from the stone on which he sat, demanded, in a stern voice, "Who art thou?"

"An Englishman," answered the soldier: "one who does not, like the monster Heselrigge, disgrace the name. I would assist you, noble Wallace, to fly this spot; after that, I shall seek refuge abroad; and there, on the fields of Guienne, demonstrate my fidelity to my King."

Mar looked at him steadily: "You mistake; I am not Sir William Wallace."

At that moment Halbert came up with the water. The Earl drank it, though now, from the impulse surprise had given to his blood, he did not require its efficacy; and turning to the venerable bearer, he asked of him whether his master were safe.

"I trust he is," replied the old man; "but you, my Lord, must hasten hence. A foul murder has been committed here, since he left it."

"But where is Lady Wallace?" asked the Earl: "if there be such danger, we must not leave her to meet it."

"She will never meet danger more!" cried the old man, clasping his hands; "she is in the bosom of the Virgin; and no second assassin's steel can reach her there."

"What!" exclaimed the Earl, hardly articulate with horror; "is Lady Wallace murdered?" Halbert answered only by his tears.

"Yes," said the soldier; "and detestation of so unmanly an outrage provoked me to desert his standard. But no time must now be lost in unavailing lamentation; Heselrigge will return; and if we, also, would not be sacrificed to his rage, we must hence immediately."

The Earl, struck dumb at this recital, gave the soldier time to recount the particulars. When he had finished, Lord Mar saw the necessity for instant flight, and ordered horses to be brought from the stables. Though he had fainted in the well, the present shock gave such a tension to his nerves, he found he could now ride without difficulty.

Halbert went as he commanded, and returned with two horses. Having only amongst rocks and glens to go, he did not bring one for himself; and begging the good soldier

might attend the Earl to Bothwell, he added, "He will guard you and this box, which Sir William Wallace holds as the apple of his eye. What it contains, I know not; and none, he says, may dare to search into. But you will take care of it for his sake, till more peaceful times allow him to reclaim his own!"

"Fatal box!" cried the soldier, regarding it with an abhorrent eye; "that was the leading cause which brought Heselrigge to Ellerslie."

"How?" enquired the Earl.—Grimsby then briefly related, that immediately after the return to Lanark of the detachment sent to Ellerslie under the command of Sir Gilbert Hambledon, an officer arrived from Douglas (the property of which he, with a troop, had been deputed to guard in the King's name); and he told the governor that Sir William Wallace had that evening taken a quantity of treasure from the castle. His report was, that the English soldiers who stood near the Scottish knight when he mounted at the castle gate, had seen an iron coffer under his arm; but not suspecting its having belonged to Douglas, they thought not of it, till they overheard Sir John Monteith, as he passed through one of the galleries, muttering something about *gold* and a *box*. To intercept the robber amongst his native glens, he deemed impracticable; and therefore came immediately to lay the information before the governor of Lanark. As the scabbard found in the affray with young Arthur, had betrayed the victor to have been Sir William Wallace, this intimation of his having been also the instrument of wresting from the grasp of Heselrigge, perhaps, the most valuable spoil in Douglas, exasperated him to the most vindictive excess. Inflamed with the double furies of revenge and avarice, he ordered out a new troop, and placing himself at its head, took the way to Ellerslie. One of the servants, whom some of Hambledon's men had seized for the sake of information, on being threatened with the torture, confessed to Heselrigge, that not only Sir William Wallace was in the house when it was attacked, but that the person whom he had rescued in the streets of Lanark, and who proved to be a wealthy nobleman, was there also. This whetted the eagerness of the governor to

reach Ellerslie ; and expecting to get a rich booty, without the most distant idea of the horrors he was going to perpetrate, a large detachment of men followed him.

“ To extort money from you, my Lord,” continued the soldier ; “ and to obtain that fatal coffer, were his main objects. But disappointed in his darling passion of avarice, he forgot he was a man ; and the blood of innocence glutted his barbarous vengeance.”

“ Hateful gold !” cried Lord Mar, spurning the box with his foot ; “ it cannot be for itself, the noble Wallace so greatly prizes it ! It must be a trust.”

“ I believe it is,” returned Halbert ; “ for he enjoined my lady to preserve it for the sake of his honour. Take care of it, then, my Lord, for the same sacred reason.”

The Englishman made no objection to accompany the Earl. And, by a suggestion of his own, Halbert brought him a Scottish bonnet and cloak from the house. While he put them on, the Earl observed, that the harper held a drawn and blood-stained sword in his hand, on which he steadfastly gazed. — “ Whence came that horrid weapon ?” cried Lord Mar.

“ It is my lady’s blood,” replied Halbert, still looking on it : “ I found it where she lay in the hall ; and I will carry it to my master. Was not every drop of her blood dear to him ? and here are many !” As the old man spoke, he bent his head on the sword, and groaned heavily.

“ England shall hear more of this !” cried Mar, as he threw himself across the horse. “ Give me that fatal box ; I will buckle it to my saddle-bow. Inadequate will be my utmost care of it, to repay the vast sorrows, its preservation, and mine, have brought upon the head of my deliverer.”

The Englishman, in silence, mounted his horse, and Halbert opened a back gate that led to the hills, which lay between Ellerslie and Bothwell castle. Lord Mar took a golden-trophied bugle from his breast : “ Give this to your master ; and tell him, that by whatever hands he sends it, the sight of it shall always command the services of Donald Mar. I go to Bothwell, in expectation that he will join me there. In making it his home, he will render me happy ;

for my friendship is now bound to him by bonds which only death can sever."

Halbert took the horn, and promising faithfully to repeat the Earl's message, prayed God to bless him and the honest soldier. A rocky promontory soon excluded them from his sight; and a few minutes more, even the sound of their horses' hoofs were lost on the soft herbage of the winding dell.

"Now I am alone, in this once happy spot!—Not a voice—not a sound—Oh, Wallace!" cried he, throwing up his venerable arms, "thy house is left unto thee desolate!—and I am to be the fatal messenger." With the last words, he struck into a deep ravine which led to the remotest solitudes of the glen; and pursued his way in dreadful silence. No human face, of Scot or English, cheered, or scared, him as he passed along. The tumult of the preceding night, by dispersing the servants of Ellerslie, had so alarmed the poor cottagers, that with one accord they fled to their kindred on the hills; amid those fastnesses of nature, to await tidings from the valley, of when all should be still, and they might then return in peace. Halbert looked to the right and to the left: no smoke, curling its grey mist from behind the intersecting rocks, reminded him of the gladsome morning hour, or invited him to take a moment's rest from his grievous journey. All was lonely and comfortless; and sighing bitterly over the wide devastation, he concealed the fatal sword under his cloak; and with a staff, which he broke from a withered tree, took his way down the winding craigs. Many a pointed flint pierced his aged feet, while exploring the almost trackless paths, which, by their direction, he hoped would lead him at length to the deep caves of Corie Lin.*

* Near those once lonely caves, now stands Bonniton House, the beautiful residence of Lady Mary Ross; the home of all hospitable kindnesses.

CHAPTER IV.

CORIE LIN.

AFTER having traversed many a weary rood of, to him, before untrodden ground, the venerable minstrel of the house of Wallace, exhausted by fatigue, sat down on the declivity of a steep craig. The burning beams of the mid-day sun, now beat upon the rocks; but the overshadowing foliage, afforded him shelter; and a few berries from the brambles, which knit themselves over the path he had yet to explore, with a draught of water from a friendly burn, offered themselves to revive his enfeebled limbs. Insufficient as they appeared, he took them, blessing Heaven for sending even these; and strengthened by half an hour's rest, again he grasped his staff to pursue his way.

After breaking a passage through the entangled shrubs, that grew across the only possible footing in this solitary wilderness, he went along the side of the expanding stream, which now, at every turning of the rocks, increased in depth and violence. The rills from above, and other mountain brooks, pouring from abrupt falls down the craigs, covered him with spray, and intercepted his passage. Finding it impracticable to proceed through the rushing torrent of a cataract, whose distant roarings might have intimidated even a younger adventurer, he turned from its tumbling waters, which burst upon his sight, and crept on his hands and knees up the opposite acclivity; catching by the fern, and other weeds, to stay him from falling back into the raging flood below. Prodigious craggy mountains towered above his head, as he ascended; while, in parts, the rolling clouds which canopied their summits, seemed descending to wrap him in their "fleecy skirts;" and in others, projecting rocks bending over the waters of the glen, left him only a narrow shelf in the cliff, along which he crept till it brought him to the mouth of a cavern.

He must either enter it, or return the way he came, or attempt the descent of overhanging precipices, which nothing could penetrate but the pinions of their native birds. Above

him was the mountain. Retread his footsteps, until he had seen his beloved master, he was resolved not to do; to perish in these glens, would be more tolerable to him; for, while he moved forward, hope, even in the arms of death, would cheer him with the whisper *that he was in the path of duty*. He therefore entered the cavity, and passing on, soon perceived an aperture; through which emerging on the other side, he found himself again on the margin of the river. Having attained a wider bed, it left him a still narrower causeway, to perform the remainder of his journey.

Huge masses of rock, canopied with a thick umbrage of firs, beech, and weeping birch, closed over the glen, and almost excluded the light of day. But more anxious, as he calculated by the increased rapidity of the stream, he must now be approaching the great fall near his master's concealment, Halbert redoubled his speed. But an unlooked-for obstacle baffled his progress. A growing gloom, which he had not observed in the sky-excluded valley, having entirely overspread the heavens, suddenly discharged itself, amidst peals of thunder, in lightning and heavy floods of rain.

Fearful of being overwhelmed by the streams, which now on all sides crossed his path, he kept upon the edge of the river, to be as far as possible from the influence of their violence. And thus he proceeded; slowly, and with trepidation, through numerous defiles; and under the plunge of many a mountain-torrent, till the augmented roar of a world of waters, dashing from side to side, and boiling up with the noise and fury of the contending elements above, told him he was indeed not far from the fall of Corie Lin.

The spray was spread in so thick a mist over the glen, he knew not how to advance. A step farther, might be on the firm earth; but more probably illusive, and dash him into the roaring Lin, where he would be engulfed at once in its furious whirlpool. He paused, and looked around. The rain had ceased; but the thunder still rolled at a distance, and echoed tremendously from the surrounding rocks. Halbert shook his grey locks, streaming with wet; and looked towards the sun, now gilding with its last rays the vast sheets of falling water.

“ This is thine hour, my master !” exclaimed the old man ; “ and surely I am too near the Lin, to be far from thee !”

With these words he raised the pipe that hung at his breast, and blew three strains of the appointed air. In former days it used to call from her bower, that fair star of evening, the beauteous Marion, now departed for ever into her native heaven.—The notes trembled, as his agitated breath breathed them into the instrument ; but feeble as they were, and though the roar of the cataract might have prevented their reaching a less attentive ear than that of Wallace, yet he sprung from the innermost recess under the fall, and dashing through the rushing waters, the next instant was at the side of Halbert.

“ Faithful creature !” cried he, catching him in his arms ; with all the joy of that moment which ends the anxious wish to learn tidings of what is dearest in the world ; “ how fares my Marion ?”

“ I am weary,” cried the heart-stricken old man ; “ take me within your sanctuary, and I will tell you all.”

Wallace perceived that his time-worn servant was indeed exhausted. And knowing the toils, and hazards of the perilous track, he must have passed over in his way to this fearful solitude ; also remembering how, as he sat in his shelter, he had himself dreaded the effects of the storm upon so aged a traveller ; he no longer wondered at the dispirited tone of his greeting, and readily accounted for the pale countenance, and tremulous step which at first had excited his alarm.

Giving the old man his hand, he led him with caution to the brink of the Lin ; and then folding him in his arms, dashed with him through the tumbling water, into the cavern he had chosen for his asylum. Halbert sunk against its rocky side ; and putting forth his hand to catch some of the water as it fell, drew a few drops to his parched lips and swallowed them.—After this light refreshment, he breathed a little, and turned his eyes upon his anxious master.

“ Are you sufficiently recovered, Halbert, to tell me how you left my dearest Marion ?”

Halbert dreaded to see the animated light, which now cheered him from the eyes of his master, overclouded with the Cimmerian horrors his story must unfold:—he evaded a direct reply—“I saw your guest in safety; I saw him and the iron box on their way to Bothwell.”

“What!” enquired Wallace, “were we mistaken? was not the Earl dead when we looked into the well?”—Halbert replied in the negative; and was proceeding with a circumstantial account of his recovery and his departure, when Wallace interrupted him.

“But what of my wife, Halbert; why tell me of others, before of her?—She whose safety, and remembrance, are now my sole comfort!”

“Oh, my dear lord!” cried Halbert, throwing himself on his knees in a paroxysm of mental agony; “she remembers you, where best her prayers can be heard. She kneels for her beloved Wallace, before the throne of God!”

“Halbert!” cried Sir William, in a low and fearful voice, “what would you say? My Marion—speak? tell me, in one word, she lives!”

“In heaven!”

At this confirmation of a sudden terror, imbibed from the ambiguous words of Halbert, and which his fond heart would not allow him to acknowledge to himself, Wallace covered his face with his hands, and fell with a deep groan against the side of the cavern.—The horrid idea of premature maternal pains, occasioned by anguish for him; of her consequent death, involving perhaps that of her infant, struck him to the soul: a mist seemed passing over his eyes; life was receding; and gladly did he believe he felt his spirit on the eve of joining hers.

In having declared that the idol of his master’s heart no longer existed for him in this world, Halbert thought he had revealed the worst, and he went on—“Her latest breath was spent in prayer for you. ‘My Wallace’ were the last words her angel spirit uttered, as it issued from her bleeding wounds.”

The cry that burst from the heart of Wallace, as he started on his feet at this horrible disclosure, seemed to pierce through all the recesses of the glen; and, with an in-

stantaneous and dismal return, was re-echoed from rock to rock. Halbert threw his arms round his master's knees. The frantic blaze of his eyes struck him with affright. "Hear me, my lord — for the sake of your wife, now an angel hovering near you, hear what I have to say."

Wallace looked around him with a wild countenance. "My Marion near me! Blessed spirit! Oh, my murdered wife — my unborn babe! Who made those wounds?" cried he, throwing himself on the ground, and seizing Halbert with a tremendous, though unconscious, grasp — "Tell me, who had the heart to aim a blow at that angel's life?"

"The Governor of Lanark," replied Halbert.

"How? for what?" demanded Wallace, with the terrific glare of madness shooting from his eyes. "My wife, my wife! what had she done?"

"He came at the head of a band of ruffians; and, seizing my lady, commanded her, on the peril of her life, to declare where you, and the Earl of Mar, and the box of treasure, were concealed. My lady persisted to refuse him information; and, in a deadly rage, he plunged his sword into her breast." Wallace clenched his hands over his face, and Halbert went on: — "Before he aimed a second blow, I had broken from the men who held me, and thrown myself on her bosom; but all could not save her: the villain's sword had penetrated her heart!"

"Great God!" exclaimed Wallace, again springing on his feet, "dost thou hear this murder?" His hands were stretched towards heaven; then falling on his knees, with his eyes fixed, and his arms yet extended, "Give me power, Almighty Judge!" cried he, "to assert thy justice! Let me avenge this angel's blood, and then take me to thyself!"

"My gracious master," cried Halbert, seeing him rise with a stern composure, "here is the fatal sword. The blood on it is sacred, and I brought it to you."

Wallace took it in his hand. He gazed at it, touched it, and kissed it frantically. The blade was hardly yet dry, and the ensanguined hue came off upon the pressure. "Marion! Marion!" cried he, "is it thine? Does thy blood stain my lip?" He paused for a moment, leaning his burning

forehead against the fatal blade ; then looking up with a terrific smile, " Beloved of my soul ! never shall this sword leave my hand, till it has drunk the life-blood of thy murderer."

" What is it you intend, my Lord !" cried Halbert, viewing with increased alarm the resolute ferocity which now, blazing from every part of his countenance, seemed to dilate his figure with more than mortal daring. " What can you do ? Your single arm —"

" I am not single—God is with me : I am his avenger. Now tremble, tyranny ! I come to hurl thee down !" At the word, he sprang from the cavern's mouth ; and had already reached the topmost cliff, when the piteous cries of Halbert penetrated his ear. They recalled him to recollection ; and returning to his faithful servant, he tried to soothe his fears, and spoke in a composed though determined tone. " I will lead you from this solitude to the mountains, where the shepherds of Ellerslie are tending their flocks. With them you will find a refuge, till you have strength to reach Bothwell castle. Lord Mar will protect you for my sake."

Halbert now remembered the bugle ; and, putting it into his master's hand, with its accompanying message, asked for some testimony in return, that the Earl might know he had delivered it safely. " Even a lock of your precious hair, my beloved master, will be sufficient."

" Thou shalt have it, severed from my head by this accursed steel," answered Wallace, taking off his bonnet, and letting his amber locks fall in tresses on his shoulders. Halbert burst into a fresh flood of tears, for he remembered how often it had been the delight of Marion to comb these bright tresses, and to twist them round her ivory fingers. Wallace looked up, as the old man's sobs became audible, and read his thoughts. " It will never be again, Halbert," cried he ; and, with a firm grasp of the sword, he cut off a large handful of his hair.

" Marion, thy blood hath marked it !" exclaimed he ; " and every hair in my head shall be dyed of the same hue, before this sword is sheathed upon thy murderers. Here, Halbert," continued he, knotting it together ; " take this

to the Earl of Mar. It is all, most likely, he will ever see of William Wallace. Should I fall, tell him to look on that, and in my wrongs read the future miseries of Scotland; and remember, that God armeth the patriot's hand. Let him act on that conviction, and Scotland may yet be free."

Halbert placed the lock in his bosom; but again repeated his entreaties, that his master would accompany him to Bothwell castle. He urged the consolation he would meet from the good Earl's friendship.

"If he indeed regard me," returned Wallace, "for my sake let him cherish you. My consolations must come from a higher hand: I go where it directs. If I live, you shall see me again. But twilight approaches — we must away. The sun must not rise again upon Heselrigge."

Halbert now followed the rapid steps of Wallace, who, assisting the feeble limbs of his faithful servant, drew him up the precipitous side of the Lin*; and then leaping from rock to rock, awaited with impatience the slower advances of the poor old harper, as he crept round a circuit of overhanging cliffs, to join him on the summit of the craigs.

Together, they struck into the most inaccessible defiles of the mountains; and proceeded, till on discerning smoke, whitening with its ascending curls the black sides of the impending rocks, Wallace saw himself near the objects of his search. He sprang on a high cliff, projecting over this mountain-valley; and blowing his bugle with a few notes of the well-known *pibroch*† of Lanarkshire, was answered by the reverberation of a thousand echoes.

At the loved sounds, which had not dared to visit their ears since the Scottish standard was lowered to Edward, the hills seemed teeming with life. Men rushed from their fastnesses, and women with their babes eagerly followed, to see whence sprung a summons so dear to every Scottish heart. Wallace stood on the cliff, like the newly-aroused genius of his country. His long plaid floated afar; and his glittering hair, streaming on the blast, seemed to mingle with the

* The cavern which sheltered Sir William Wallace near Corie Lin, is yet revered by the people.

† *Pibroch*, a martial piece of music adapted to the Highland pipe. Each great family has one peculiarly its own.

golden fires which shot from the heavens. Wallace raised his eyes : a clash, as of the tumult of contending armies, filled the sky ; and flames, and flashing steel, and the horrid red of battle, streamed from the clouds upon the hills.

“ Scotsmen ! ” cried Wallace, waving the fatal sword, which blazed in the glare of these northern lights, like a flaming brand, “ behold, how the heavens cry aloud to you ! I come, in the midst of their fires, to call you to vengeance ! I come, in the name of all ye hold dear — of the wives of your bosoms, and the children now in their arms — to tell you, the poniard of England is unsheathed : innocence, and age, and infancy, fall before it. With this sword, last night, did Heselrigge, the English tyrant of Lanark, break into my house and murder my wife ! ”

The shriek of horror that burst from every mouth interrupted Wallace. “ Vengeance ! vengeance ! ” was the cry of the men, while tumultuous lamentations for the “ Sweet Lady of Ellerslie ” filled the air from the women.

Wallace sprang from the cliff into the midst of his brave countrymen. “ Follow me, then, to strike the mortal blow ! ”

“ Lead on ! ” cried a vigorous old man ; “ I drew this stout claymore last in the battle of Largs. *Life and Alexander* was then the word of victory ; now, ye accursed Southrons, ye shall meet the slogen* of *Death and Lady Marion*. ”

“ Death and Lady Marion ! ” was echoed with shouts from mouth to mouth. Every sword was drawn. And those hardy peasants who owned none, seizing the instruments of pasturage, armed themselves with wolf-spears, pickaxes, forks, and scythes.

Sixty resolute men now arranged themselves around their chief. Wallace, whose widowed heart turned icy cold at the dreadful slogen of his Marion’s name, more fiercely grasped his sword, and murmured to himself — “ From this hour may Scotland date her liberty, or Wallace return no more ! My faithful friends, ” cried he, turning to his men, and placing the plummed bonnet on his head ; “ let the spirits of your fathers inspire your souls ! ye go

* Slogen, so the war-word was termed.

to assert that freedom for which they died. Before the moon sets, the tyrant of Lanark shall fall in blood."

"Death and Lady Marion!" was the pealing answer that echoed from the hills.

Wallace again sprang on the cliffs. His brave peasants followed him. And taking their rapid march by a near cut through a hitherto unexplored defile of the Cartlane craigs, leaping chasms, and climbing perpendicular rocks, they suffered no obstacles to impede their steps, while thus rushing onward like lions to their prey.

CHAPTER V.

LANARK CASTLE.

THE women, and the men whom age withheld from so desperate an enterprise, now thronged around Halbert, to ask a circumstantial account of the disaster, which had filled all with so much horror.

Many were the tears which followed his recital. Not one of his auditors was an indifferent listener; all had individually, or in persons dear to them, partaken of the tender Marion's benevolence. Their sick beds had been comforted by her charity; her voice had often administered consolation to their sorrows; her hand had smoothed their pillows, and placed the crucifix before their dying eyes. Some had recovered to bless her; and some departed to record her virtues in heaven.

"Ah! is she gone?" cried a young woman, raising her face covered with tears from the bosom of her infant; "is the loveliest lady that ever the sun shone upon, cold in the grave? Alas, for me! she it was that gave me the roof under which my baby was born. She it was who, when the Southron soldiers slew my father, and drove us from our home in Ayrshire, gave to my old mother, and to my poor wounded husband, our cottage by the burn side. Ah! well can I spare him to avenge her murder."

The night being far advanced, Halbert retired at the

invitation of this young woman to repose on the heather-bed of her husband, who was now absent with Wallace. The rest of the peasantry withdrew to their coverts; while she, and some other women whose anxieties would not allow them to sleep, sat at the cavern's mouth, watching the slowly moving hours.

The objects of their fond and fervent prayers, Wallace and his little army, were rapidly pursuing their march. It was midnight — all was silent as they hurried through the glen; as they ascended with flying footsteps the steep acclivities that led to the cliffs which overhung the vale Ellerslie. Wallace must pass along their brow. Beneath was the tomb of his sacrificed Marion! He rushed forward to snatch one look even of the roof which shrouded her beloved remains.

But in the moment before he mounted the intervening height, a soldier in English armour crossed the path, and was seized by his men. One of them would have cut him down, but Wallace turned away the weapon. — “Hold, Scot!” cried he, “you are not a Southron, to strike the defenceless. This man has no sword.”

The reflection on their enemy which this plea of mercy contained, reconciled the impetuous Scots to the clemency of their leader. The rescued man joyfully recognising the voice of Wallace, exclaimed, “It is my Lord! It is Sir William Wallace, that has saved my life a second time!”

“Who are you?” asked Wallace: — “that helmet can cover no friend of mine.”

“I am your servant Dugald,” returned the man; “he whom your brave arm saved from the battle-axe of Arthur Heselrigge.”

“I cannot now ask you how you came by that armour; but if you be yet a Scot, throw it off, and follow me.”

“Not to Ellerslie, my Lord,” cried he; “it has been plundered and burnt to the ground by the governor of Lanark.”

“Then,” exclaimed Wallace, striking his breast, “are the remains of my beloved Marion for ever ravished from my eyes! Insatiate monster!”

“He is Scotland's curse,” cried the veteran of Largs:

“Forward, my Lord, in mercy to your country’s groans!”

Wallace had now mounted the craig which overlooked Ellerslie. His once happy home had disappeared, and all beneath lay a heap of smoking ashes. He hastened from the sight, and directing the point of his sword with a forceful action towards Lanark, re-echoed with supernatural strength, “Forward!”

With the rapidity of lightning his little host flew over the hills, reached the cliffs which divided them from the town, and leaped down before the outward trench of the castle of Lanark. In a moment Wallace sprung so feeble a barrier; and with a shout of death, in which the tremendous slogen of his men now joined, he rushed upon the guard that held the northern gate.

Here slept the governor. These opponents being slain by the first sweep of the Scottish swords, Wallace hastened onward, winged with twofold retribution. The noise of battle was behind him; for the shout of his men had aroused the garrison, and drawn its soldiers, half naked, to the spot. He reached the door of the governor. — The sentinel who stood there, flew before the terrible warrior that presented himself. All the mighty vengeance of Wallace blazed in his face, and seemed to surround his figure with a terrible splendour. With one stroke of his foot he drove the door from its hinges, and rushed into the room.

What a sight for the now awakened, and guilty Heselrigge! — It was the husband of the defenceless woman he had murdered, come in the power of justice, with uplifted arm, and vengeance in his eyes! With a terrific scream of despair, and an outcry for the mercy he dared not expect, he fell back into the bed, and sought an unavailing shield beneath its folds.

“Marion! Marion!” cried Wallace, as he threw himself towards the bed — and buried the sword, yet red with her blood, through the coverlid, deep into the heart of her murderer. A fiend-like yell from the slain Heselrigge, told him his work was done; and drawing out the sword, he took the streaming blade in his hand — “Vengeance is satisfied!” — cried he; “thus, O God! do I henceforth divide self from my heart!” As he spoke, he snapt the

sword in twain, and throwing away the pieces, put back with his hand the impending weapons of his brave companions ; who, having cleared the passage of their assailants, had hurried forward, to assist in ridding their country of so detestable a tyrant.

“ ’Tis done,” cried he. As he spoke, he drew down the coverlid, and discovered the body of the governor weltering in blood. The ghastly countenance, on which the agonies of hell seemed imprinted, glared horrible even in death.

Wallace turned away ; but the men, exulting in the sight, with a shout of triumph exclaimed — “ So fall the enemies of Sir William Wallace ! ”

“ Rather, So fall the enemies of Scotland ! ” cried he. “ From this hour, Wallace has neither love nor resentment but for her. Heaven has heard me devote myself to work our country’s freedom, or to die. Who will follow me in so just a cause ? ”

“ All ! — With Wallace for ever ! ”

The new clamour which this resolution excited, intimidated a fresh band of soldiers, who were hastening across the court-yard, to seek the enemy in the governor’s apartments. But on the noise, they hastily retreated ; and no exertions of their officers could prevail on them to advance again ; or even to appear in sight, when the resolute Scots, with Wallace at their head, soon afterwards issued from the great gate. The English commanders seeing the panic of their men, and which they were less able to surmount, on account of the way to the gate being strewn with their slain comrades, fell back into the shadow of the towers ; where, by the light of the moon, like men paralysed, they viewed the departure of their enemies over the trenches.

CHAPTER VI.

CARTLANE CRAIGS.

THE sun was rising from the eastern hills, when the victorious group re-entered the mountain-glen where their

families lay. The cheerful sounds of their bugles, aroused the sleepers from their caves; and many were the gratulations, and embraces, which welcomed the warriors to affection and repose.

Wallace, while he threw himself along a bed of purple heath, gathered for him by many a busy female hand, listened with a calmed mind to the fond enquiries of Halbert; who, awakened by the first blast of the horn, had started from his shelter, and hastened to hail the safe return of his master. — While his faithful followers retired, each to the bosom of his rejoicing family, the fugitive chief of Ellerslie remained alone with the old man; and recounted to him the success of his enterprise, and the double injuries he had avenged. — “The assassin,” continued he, “has paid with his life for his inexpiable crime. — He is slain, and with him several of Edward’s garrison. — My vengeance may be appeased; but what, O Halbert, can bring redress to my widowed heart? — All is lost to me: I have now nothing to do with this world, but as I may be the instrument of good to others! — The Scottish sword has now been redrawn against our foes; and, with the blessing of Heaven, I swear, it shall not be sheathed, till Scotland be rid of the tyranny which has slain my happiness! — This night, my gallant Scots have sworn to accomplish my vow; and death, or liberty, must be the future fate of Wallace and his friends.”

At these words, tears ran down the cheeks of the venerable harper: — “Alas! my too brave master,” exclaimed he, “what is it you would do? Why rush upon certain destruction? — For the sake of her memory, whom you deplore; in pity to the worthy Earl of Mar, who will arraign himself as the cause of all these calamities, and of your death, should you fall — retract this desperate vow!”

“No, my good Halbert,” returned Wallace, “I am neither desperate, nor inefficient; and you, faithful creature, shall have no cause to mourn this night’s resolution. Go to Lord Mar, and tell him what are my resolves. I have nothing now, that binds me to life but my country; and henceforth she shall be to me as mistress, wife, and child. — Would you deprive me of this tie, Halbert?”

Would you, by persuading me to resign my interest in her, devote me to a hermit's seclusion amongst these rocks? — for I will never again appear in the tracks of men, if it be not as the defender of her rights."

"But where, my master, shall we find you, should the Earl choose to join you with his followers?"

"In this wilderness; whence I shall not remove rashly. My purpose is to save my countrymen, not to sacrifice them in needless dangers."

Halbert, oppressed with sorrow at the images his foreboding heart drew, of the direful scenes in which his beloved master had pledged himself to become the leader, bowed his head with submission; and leaving Wallace to rest, retired to the mouth of the cavern to weep alone.

It was noon before the chief awaked from the death-like sleep, into which kind nature had plunged his long harassed senses. He opened his eyes languidly; and when the sight of his rocky apartment, forced on him the recollection of all his miseries, he uttered a deep groan.—That sad sound, so different from the jocund voice with which Wallace used to issue from his rest, struck on the heart of Halbert. He drew near his master, to receive his last commands for Bothwell — "On my knees," added he, "will I implore the Earl to send you succours."

"He needs not prayers for that," returned Wallace; "but depart, dear, worthy Halbert; it will comfort me, to know you are in safety: and, whithersoever you go, you carry my thanks and blessings with you."

Old age opens the fountain of tears: — Halbert's flowed profusely, and bathed his master's hand. — Could Wallace have wept, it would have been then; but that gentle emollient of grief was denied him; and with a voice of assumed cheerfulness, he renewed his efforts to encourage his desponding servant. — Half persuaded, that a superior Being did indeed call his beloved master to some extraordinary exertions for Scotland, he bade him an anxious farewell; and then withdrew, to commit him, with his best blessings, to the fidelity of the companions of his destiny. A few of them led the old man on his way, as far as the western declivity of the hills; and then bidding him good speed, he took the remainder of his journey alone.

After traversing many a weary mile, between Cartlane craigs and Bothwell castle, he reached the valley in which that fortress stands ; and calling to the warder at its gates, that he came from Sir William Wallace, was immediately admitted, and conducted into the castle.

Halbert was led by a servant into a spacious chamber, where the Earl lay upon a couch. — A lady, richly habited ; and in the bloom of life, sat at his head. Another, much younger, and of resplendent beauty, knelt at his feet, with a salver of medicinal cordials in her hand. The Lady Marion's loveliness, had been that of a soft moonlight evening : but the face which now turned upon Halbert as he entered, was " full of light, and splendour, and joy ;" and the old man's eyes, even though dimmed in tears, were dazzled. A young man stood near her. On the entrance of Halbert, whom the Earl instantly recognised, he raised himself on his arm, and welcomed him. The young lady rose ; and the young man stepped eagerly forward.

The Earl enquired anxiously for Sir William Wallace, and asked if he might expect him soon at Bothwell.

" He cannot yet come, my Lord," replied Halbert : " hard is the task he has laid upon his valiant head ; but he is avenged ! — he has slain the governor of Lanark." — A faint exclamation broke from the lips of the young lady.

" How ? " demanded the Earl.

Halbert now gave a particular account of the anguish of Wallace, when he was told of the sanguinary events which had taken place at Ellerslie. As the honest harper described, in his own ardent language, the generous zeal with which the shepherds on the heights took up arms to avenge the wrong done to their chief, the countenance of the young lady, and of the youth, glowed through tears : they looked on each other ; and Halbert proceeded : —

" When my dear master, and his valiant troop, were pursuing their way to Lanark, he was met by Dugald ; the wounded man who had rushed into the room to apprise us of the advance of the English forces. During the confusion of that horrible night, and in the midst of the contention, in spite of his feebleness, he crept away, and concealed

himself from the soldiers amongst the bushes of the glen. When all was over, he came from his hiding-place; and finding the English soldier's helmet and cloak, poor Dugald, still fearful of falling in with any straggling party of Heselrigge's, disguised himself in these Southron clothes. Exhausted with hunger, he was venturing towards the house in search of food, when the sight of armed men in the hall, made him hastily retreat into his former place of refuge. His alarm was soon increased by a redoubled noise from the house; oaths, and horrid bursts of merriment, seemed to have turned that once abode of honour and of loveliness, into the clamorous haunts of ribaldry and rapine. In the midst of the uproar he was surprised by seeing flames issue from the windows. Soldiers poured from the doors with shouts of triumph; and then watched by the fire, while their comrades carried off the booty, till the interior of the building was consumed, and the rest sunk a heap of smoking ruins.

"The work completed, these horrid ministers of devastation left the vale to its own solitude. Dugald, after waiting a long time to ascertain they were quite gone, crawled from the bushes; and ascending the cliffs, he was speeding to the mountains, when, encountering our armed shepherds they mistook him for an English soldier, and seized him. The chief of ruined Ellerslic recognised his servant; and, with redoubled indignation, his followers heard the history of the mouldering ashes before them."

"Brave, persecuted Wallace!" exclaimed the Earl, "how dearly was my life purchased! But proceed, Halbert; tell me that he returned safe from Lanark."

Halbert now recounted the dreadful scenes which took place in that town; and that when the governor fell, Wallace made a vow never to mingle with the world again till Scotland should be free.

"Alas!" cried the Earl, "what miracle is to effect that? Surely he will not bury those noble qualities, that bloom of manhood, within the gloom of a cloister!"

"No, my Lord, he has retired to the fastnesses of Cartlane craigs."

"Why?" resumed Mar, "why did he not rather fly

to me? This castle is strong: and while one stone of it remains upon another, not all the hosts of England should take him hence."

"It was not your friendship he doubted," returned the old man: "love for his country, compels him to reject all comfort in which she does not share. His last words to me were these: — 'I have nothing now to do, but to assert the liberties of Scotland, and to rid her of her enemies. Go to Lord Mar; take this lock of my hair, stained with the blood of my wife. It is all, most likely, he will ever again see of William Wallace. Should I fall, tell him to look on that, and in my wrongs read the future miseries of Scotland, and remember that God armeth the patriot!'"

Tears dropped so fast from the young lady's eyes, she was obliged to walk to a window to restrain a more violent burst of grief.

"O! my uncle," cried the youth, "surely the freedom of Scotland is possible. I feel in my soul, that the words of the brave Wallace are prophetic."

The Earl held the lock of hair in his hands; he regarded it, lost in meditation.

"'God armeth the patriot!'" He paused again, his before pallid cheek taking a thousand animated hues; then raising the sacred present to his lips, "Yes," cried he, "thy vow shall be performed; and while Donald Mar has an arm to wield a sword, or a man to follow to the field, thou shalt command both him and them!"

"But not as you are, my Lord!" cried the elder lady: "your wounds are yet unhealed; your fever is still raging! Would it not be madness, to expose your safety at such a crisis?"

"I shall not take arms myself," answered he, "till I can bear them to effect; meanwhile, all of my clan, and of my friends, that I can raise to guard the life of my deliverer, and to promote the cause, must be summoned. This lock shall be my pennon; and what Scotsman will look on that, and shrink from his colours!—Here, Helen, my child," cried he, addressing the young lady, "before tomorrow's dawn, have this hair wrought into my banner. It

will be a patriot's standard ; and let his own irresistible words be the motto—*God armeth me.*”

Helen advanced with awestruck trepidation. Having been told by the Earl of the generous valour of Wallace, and of the cruel death of his lady, she had conceived a gratitude and a pity deeper than language could express, for the man who had lost so much, by succouring one so dear to her. She took the lock, waving in yellow light upon her hands ; and trembling with emotion, was leaving the room, when she heard her cousin throw himself on his knees.

“ I beseech you, my honoured uncle,” cried he, “ if you have love for me, or value for my future fame, allow me to be the bearer of yon banner to Sir William Wallace.”

Helen stopped at the threshold, to hear the reply.

“ You could not, my dear nephew,” returned the Earl, “ have asked me any favour I could grant with so much joy. To-morrow I will collect the peasantry of Bothwell ; and with those, and my own followers, you shall join Wallace the same night.”

Ignorant of the horrors of war, and only alive to the glory of the present cause, Helen sympathised in the ardour of her cousin ; and with a thrill of delight hurried to her apartment to commence her task.

Far different were the sentiments of the young countess, her step-mother. As soon as Lord Mar had let this declaration escape his lips, alarmed at the effect so much agitation might have on his enfeebled constitution, and fearful of the perilous cause he ventured thus openly to espouse, she desired his nephew to take the now comforted Halbert (who was pouring forth his gratitude to the Earl for the promptitude of his orders), and see that he was attended with hospitality.

When the room was left to the Earl and herself, with an uneasy presage of some impending evil, she ventured to remonstrate with him upon the facility with which he had become a party in so treasonable a matter : “ Consider, my Lord,” continued she, “ that Scotland is now entirely in the power of the English monarch. His garrisons occupy our towns, his creatures hold every place of trust in the kingdom !”

“ And is such a list of oppressions, my dear lady, to be an argument for longer bearing them? Had I, and other Scottish nobles, dared to resist this overwhelming power, after the battle of Dunbar; had we, instead of kissing the sword that robbed us of our liberties, kept our own unsheathed within the bulwarks of our mountains, Scotland might now be free; I should not have been insulted by our English tyrants in the streets of Lanark; and, to save my life, William Wallace would not now be mourning his murdered wife, and without a home to shelter him!”

Lady Mar paused at this observation; but resumed—
 “ That may be true. But the die is cast; Scotland is lost for ever; and, by your attempting to assist your friend in this rash essay to recover it, you will only lose yourself also, without preserving him. The project is wild, and needless. What would you have? Now that the contention between the two kings is past; now that Baliol has surrendered his crown to Edward, is not Scotland at peace?”

“ A bloody peace, Joanna,” answered the Earl; “ witness these wounds. An usurper’s peace is more destructive than his open hostilities; plunder and assassination are its concomitants. I have now seen and felt enough of Edward’s jurisdiction. It is time I should awake, and, like Wallace, determine to die for Scotland, or avenge her.”

Lady Mar wept. “ Cruel Donald! is this the reward of all my love and duty? you tear yourself from me, you consign your estates to sequestration, you rob your children of their name; nay, by your infectious example, you stimulate our brother Bothwell’s son to head the band that is to join this madman, Wallace!”

“ Hold, Joanna!” cried the Earl; “ what is it I hear? You call the hero, who, in saving your husband’s life, reduced himself to these cruel extremities, a *madman*! Was he *mad*, because he prevented the Countess of Mar from being a widow? Was he *mad*, because he prevented her children from being fatherless?”

The Countess, overcome by this cutting reproach, threw herself upon her husband’s neck: “ Alas, my Lord,” cried she, “ all is madness to me, that would plunge you in danger. Think of your own safety; of my innocent twins

now in their cradle, should you fall. Think of our brother's feelings, when you send his only son to join one, he, perhaps, will call a rebel!"

"If Earl Bothwell considered himself a vassal of Edward's he would not now be with Lord Loch-awe. From the moment that gallant Highlander retired to Argyleshire, the King of England regarded his adherents with suspicion. Bothwell's present visit to Loch-awe, you see is sufficient to sanction the plunder of this castle by the *peaceful* government you approve. You saw the opening of proceedings, which, had they come to their dreadful issue, where, my dear Joanna, would now be your home, your husband, your children? It was the arm of the brave chief of Ellerslie, which saved them from destruction."

Lady Mar shuddered. "I admit the truth of what you say. But, oh! is it not hard, to put my all to the hazard; to see the bloody field, on one side of my beloved Donald, and the mortal scaffold on the other?"

"Hush!" cried the Earl, "it is justice that beckons me, and victory will receive me to her arms. Let, O Power above!" exclaimed he, hurried away by enthusiasm; "let the victorious field for Scotland, be Donald Mar's grave, rather than doom him to live a witness of her miseries!"

"I cannot stay to hear you!" answered the Countess; "I must invoke the Virgin to give me courage to be a patriot's wife; at present, your words are daggers to me."

In uttering this, she hastily withdrew, and left the Earl to muse on the past,—to concert plans for the portentous future.

CHAPTER VII.

BOTHWELL CASTLE.

MEANWHILE the Lady Helen had retired to her own apartments. Lord Mar's banner being brought to her from the armoury, she sat down to weave into its silken texture the amber locks of the Scottish chief. Admiring their softness

and beauty, while her needle flew, she pictured to herself the fine countenance they had once adorned.

The duller extremities of the hair, which a sadder liquid than that which now dropped from her eyes, had rendered stiff, and difficult to entwine with the warp of the silk, seemed to adhere to her fingers. Helen almost shrunk from the touch. "Unhappy lady!" sighed she to herself; "what a pang must have rent her heart, when the stroke of so cruel a death tore her from such a husband!—and how must he have loved her, when for her sake he thus forswears all future joys, but those which camps and victories may yield!—Ah! what would I give to be my cousin Murray, to bear this pennon at his side! What would I give to reconcile so admirable a being to happiness again—to weep his griefs, or to smile him into comfort! To be that man's friend would be a higher honour than to be Edward's queen."

While her heart was thus discoursing with itself, a page opened the door, saying that her cousin begged admittance. She had fastened the flowing charge into its azure field, and was embroidering the motto, when she replied to the request of Murray.

"You know not, my good old man," said the youth to Halbert, as he conducted him across the galleries, "what a noble mind is contained in that lovely young creature. I was brought up with her, and to the sweet contagion of her taste, do I owe that love of true glory, which carries me to the side of Sir William Wallace. The virtuous only can awaken any interest in her heart; and in these degenerate days, long might have been its sleep, had not the history which my uncle recounted of your brave master, aroused her attention, and filled her with an admiration equal to my own. I know she rejoices in my present destination. And to prevent her hearing from your own lips, all you have now told me of the mild, as well as heroic virtues of my intended commander—all you have said of the heroism of his wife,—would be depriving her of a mournful pleasure, only to be appreciated by a heart such as hers."

The grey-haired bard of Ellerslie, who had ever received

the dearest rewards for his songs, in the smiles of its mistress, did not require persuasion, to appear before the gentle Lady of Mar, or to recite in her ears, the story of departed loveliness, fairer than poet ever feigned.

Helen rose, as he and her cousin appeared. Murray approved the execution of her work, and Halbert, with a full heart, took the pennon in his hand. "Ah! little did my dear lady think," exclaimed he, "that one of these loved locks would ever be suspended on a staff to lead men to battle! What changes have a few days made! She, the gentlest of women, laid in a bloody grave; and he, the most benevolent of human beings, wielding an exterminating sword!"

"You speak of her grave, venerable man," enquired Helen: "had you then an opportunity of performing the rites of sepulture to her remains?"

"No, madam," replied he; "after the worthy English soldier, now in this castle, assisted me to place her precious body in my Lord's oratory, I had no opportunity of returning to give her a more holy grave."

"Alas!" cried Helen; "then her sacred relics have been consumed in the burning house!"

"I hope not," rejoined Halbert; "the chapel I speak of is at some distance from the main building. It was excavated in the rock by Sir Ronald Crawford, who gave the name of Ellerslie to this estate, in compliment to Sir William's place of birth in Renfrewshire, and bestowed it on the bridal pair. Since then, the Ellerslie of Clydesdale has been as dear to my master as that of the Carth; and well it might be, for it was not only the home of all his wedded joys, but under its roof his mother, the Lady Margaret Crawford, drew her first breath. Ah! woe is me! that happy house is now, like herself, reduced to cold, cold ashes! She married Sir Malcolm Wallace, and he is gone too! Both the parents of my honoured master, died in the bloom of their lives:—and a grievous task will it be to whoever is to tell the good Sir Ronald, that the last sweet flower of Ellerslie is now cut down! that the noblest branch of his own stem, is torn from the soil to which he had

transplanted it, and cast far away into the waste wilderness !”*

The tears of the venerable harper bore testimony to his inward resolve, that this messenger should not be himself. Lady Helen, who had fallen into a reverie during the latter part of his speech, now spoke, and with something of eagerness.

“ Then we may hope,” rejoined she, “ that the oratory has not only escaped the flames, but perhaps the access of the English soldiers ? Would it not comfort your Lord to have that sweet victim entombed according to the rites of the church ?”

“ Surely, my Lady : but how can that be done ? He thinks her remains were lost in the conflagration of Ellerslie ; and for fear of precipitating him into the new dangers which might have menaced him had he sought to bring away her body, I did not disprove his mistake.”

“ But her body shall be brought away,” rejoined Lady Helen ; “ it shall have holy burial.”

“ To effect this, command my services,” exclaimed Murray.

Helen thanked him for an assistance which would render the completion of her design easy. The English soldier as guide, and a troop from Bothwell, she said, must accompany him.

“ Alas ! my young Lord,” interposed Halbert, “ suppose you should meet some of the English still loitering there !”

“ And what of that, my honest Halbert ? would not I and my trusty band make them clear the way ? Is it not to give comfort to the deliverer of my uncle that I seek the glen ?—and shall any thing in mortal shape make Andrew Murray turn his back ? No, Halbert, I was not born on Saint Andrew’s day for nought ; and by his bright cross I swear, either to lay Lady Wallace in the tomb of my an-

* The Ellerslie in Renfrewshire here referred to, and which was the birth-place of Sir William Wallace, and the hereditary property of his father, Sir Malcolm Wallace, was situated in the Abbey parish of Paisley, three miles west of the town of Paisley, and nine from Glasgow. A large and old oak, still called *Wallace’s Oak*, stands close to the road from Paisley to Beith ; and within a short distance from it once stood the manor of Ellerslie. This venerable name is now corrupted into Elderslie ; and the estate has become the property of Archibald Spiers, Esq., M. P. for Renfrewshire.—For this topographical account, I am indebted to a Renfrewshire gentleman.

cestors, or to leave my bones to blanch on the grave of hers !”

Helen loved the resolution of her cousin ; and believing that the now ravaged Ellerslie had no attractions to hold marauders amongst its ruins, she dismissed Lord Andrew to make his preparations, and turned herself to prefer her suit accordingly to her father.

Ere Halbert withdrew, he respectfully put her hand to his lips. “ Good night,” continued she ; “ ere you see me again, I trust the earthly part of the angel now in Paradise, will be safe within these towers.” He poured a thousand blessings on her head, and almost thought that he saw in her beautiful form one of heaven’s inhabitants, sent to bear away his dear mistress to her divine abode.

On entering her father’s apartment, Lady Helen found him alone. She repeated to him the substance of her conversation with Wallace’s faithful servant ; “ and my wish is,” continued she, “ to have the murdered lady’s remains entombed in the cemetery of this castle.”

The Earl approved her request, with expressions of satisfaction, at the filial affection which so lively a gratitude to his preserver evinced.

“ May I then, my dear father,” returned she, “ have your permission to pay our debt of gratitude to Sir William Wallace, to the utmost of our power ?”

“ You are at liberty, my noble child, to do as you please. My vassals, my coffers, all are at your command.”

Helen kissed his hand : — “ May I have what I please from the armoury ?”

“ Command even there,” said the Earl ; “ your uncle Bothwell is too true a Scot to grudge a sword in so pious a cause.”

Helen threw her arms about her father’s neck, thanking him tenderly, and with a beating heart retired to prosecute her plans. Murray, who met her in the anti-room, informed her, that fifty men, the sturdiest in the glen, awaited her orders ; while she, telling her cousin of the Earl’s approval, took the sacred banner in her hand, and followed him to the gallery in the hall.

The moment she appeared, a shout of joy bade her wel-

come. Murray waved his hand in token of silence ; while she, smiling with the benignity that spoke her angel errand, spoke with agitation : —“ My brave friends !” said she, “ I thank you for the ardour with which, by this night’s enterprise, you assist me to pay, in part, the everlasting tribute due to the man who preserved to me the blessing of a father.”

“ And to us, noble lady,” cried they, “ the most generous of chiefs !”

“ With that spirit, then,” returned she, “ I address ye with greater confidence. Who amongst you will shrink from following this standard to the field for Scotland’s honour ? Who will refuse to make himself the especial guardian of the life of Sir William Wallace ? and who, in the moment of peril, will not stand by him to the last ?”

“ None are here,” cried a young man, advancing before his fellows, “ who would not gladly die in his defence.”

“ We swear it !” burst from every lip at once.

She bowed her head, and said —“ Return from Ellerslie to-morrow, with the bier of its sainted mistress. I will then bestow, upon every man in this band, a war-bonnet plumed with my colours. This banner will lead you to the side of Sir William Wallace. In the shock of battle look at its golden ensign, and remember that God not only *armeth the patriot’s hand*, but shieldeth his heart. In this faith, be ye the bucklers which Heaven sends to guard the life of Wallace ; and so honoured, exult in your station, and expect the future gratitude of Scotland.”

“ Wallace and Lady Helen ! to death or liberty !” was the animated response to this exhortation — and smiling and kissing her hand to them in token of thanks, she retired in the midst of their acclamations. Murray, ready armed for his expedition, met her at the door. Restored to his usual vivacity by the spirit-moving emotions which the present scene awakened in his heart, he forgot the horrors which had aroused his zeal, in the glory of some anticipated victory ; and giving her a gay salutation, led her back to her apartments, where the English soldier awaited her commands. Lady Helen, with a gentle grace, commended his noble resentment of Heselrigge’s violence.

“ Lands in Mar shall be yours,” added she ; “ or a post

of honour in the little army the Earl is now going to raise. Speak but the word, and you shall find, worthy Englishman, that neither a Scotsman, nor his daughter, know what it is to be ungrateful."

The blood mounted into the soldier's cheek : — " I thank you, sweetest lady, for this generous offer ; but, as I am an Englishman, I dare not accept it. My arms are due to my own country ; and whether I am tied to it by lands and possessions, or have nought but my English blood, and my oath to my king, to bind me, still I should be equally unwarranted in breaking those bonds. I left Heselrigge because he dishonoured my country ; and for me to forswear her, would be to make myself infamous. Hence, all I ask is, that after I have this night obeyed your gracious commands, in leading your men to Ellerslie, the Earl of Mar will allow me to instantly depart for the nearest port."

Lady Helen replied, that she revered his sentiments too sincerely, to insult them by any persuasions to the contrary ; and taking a diamond clasp from her bosom, she put it into his hand : — " Wear that in remembrance of your virtue, and of Helen Mar's gratitude." The man kissed it respectfully, and, bowing, swore to preserve so distinguishing a gift to the latest hour of his existence.

Helen retired to her chamber to finish her task ; and Murray, bidding her good night, repaired to the Earl's apartments, to take his final orders, before he and his troop set out for the ruins of Ellerslie.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOTHWELL CHAPEL.

NIGHT having passed over the sleepless heads of the inhabitants of Bothwell castle ; as soon as the sun arose, the Earl of Mar was carried from his chamber, and laid on a couch in the state apartment. His lady had not yet left the room of his daughter, by whose side she had lain the whole night, in hopes of infecting her with the fears which possessed herself.

Helen replied, that she could see no reason for direful apprehensions, if her father, instead of joining Wallace in person, would, when he had sent him succours, retire with his family into the Highlands ; and there await the issue of the contest. “ It is too late to retreat, my dear madam,” continued she ; “ the first blow against the public enemy was struck in defence of Lord Mar : and would you have my father act so base a part, as to abandon his preserver to the wrath such generous assistance has provoked ? ”

“ Alas, my child ! ” answered the Countess, “ what great service will he have done to me or to your father, if he deliver him from one danger, only to plunge him into another ? Edward’s power in this country is too great to be resisted now. Have not most of our barons sworn fealty to him ? and are not the potent families of the Cummin, the Soulis, and the March, all in his interest ? You may perhaps say, that most of these are my relations, and that I may turn them which way I will ; but if I have no influence with a husband, it would be madness to expect it over more distant kindred. How then, with such a host against him, can your infatuated father venture, without despair, to support the man who breaks the peace with England ? ”

“ Who can despair, my dear madam,” returned Helen, “ in so just a cause ? Let us rather believe with our good King David, that ‘ Honour must hope always ; for no real evil can befall the virtuous, either in this world or the next ! ’ Were I a man, the justice that leads on the brave Wallace, would nerve my arm with the strength of a host. Besides, look at our country : — God’s gift of freedom is stampt upon it. Our mountains are his seal. Plains are the proper territories of tyranny : there the armies of an usurper may extend themselves with ease ; leaving no corner unoccupied in which patriotism might shelter or treason hide. But mountains, glens, morasses, lakes, set bounds to conquest ; and amidst these, stands the impregnable seat of liberty. To such a fortress, to the deep defiles of Loch Catherine, or to the cloud-piercing heights of Corryarraick, I would have my father retire. In safety he may there watch the footsteps of our mountain-goddess, till, led by her immortal champion, she plants her standard again upon the hills of Scotland.”

The complexion of the animated Helen shone with a radiant glow. Her heart panted with a foretaste of the delight she would feel, when all her generous wishes should be fulfilled; and pressing the now completed banner to her breast, with an enthusiasm she believed prophetic, her lips moved, though her voice did not utter the inexpressible rapture of her heart.

Lady Mar looked at her. "It is well, romantic girl, that you are of my own powerless sex; had it been otherwise, your mad-headed disobedience might have made me rue the day I became your father's wife."

"Sex," returned Helen, "could not have altered my sense of duty. Whether man or woman, I would obey you in all things consistent with my duty to a higher power; but when it commands, then, by the ordinance of Heaven, we must 'leave father and mother, and cleave unto it.'"

"And what, O foolish Helen! do you call a higher duty than that of a child to a parent, or a husband to his wife?"

"Duty of any kind," respectfully answered the young daughter of Mar, "cannot be transgressed with innocence. Nor would it be any relinquishing of duty to you, should my father leave you to take up arms in the assertion of his country's rights. Her rights are your safety; and therefore, in defending them, a husband or a son best shows his sense of domestic as well as of public duty."

"Who taught you this sophistry, Helen? Not your heart, for it would start at the idea of your father's blood."

Helen turned pale. "Perhaps, madam, had not the preservation of my father's blood occasioned such malignity from the English, that nothing but an armed force can deliver his preserver, I too might be content to see Scotland in slavery. But, now, to wish my father to shrink behind the excuse of far-strained family duties, and to abandon Sir William Wallace to the bloodhounds who hunt his life, would be to devote the name of Mar to infamy, and deservedly bring a curse upon his offspring."

"Then it is to preserve Sir William Wallace you are thus anxious. Your spirit of freedom is now disallowed,

and all this mighty gathering is for him. My husband, his vassals, your cousin, and, in short, the sequestration of the estates of Mar and Bothwell, are all to be put to the hazard, on account of a frantic outlaw ; to whom, since the loss of his wife, I should suppose, death would be preferable to any gratitude we can pay him."

Lady Helen, at this ungrateful language, inwardly thanked Heaven, that she inherited no part of the blood which animated so unfeeling a heart. "That he is an outlaw, Lady Mar, springs from us. That death is the preferable comforter of his sorrows, also, he owes to us ; for was it not for my father's sake that his wife fell, and that he himself was driven into the wilds? I do not, then, blush for making his preservation, my first prayer ; and that he may achieve the freedom of Scotland, is my second."

"We shall see whose prayers will be answered first," returned Lady Mar, rising coldly from her seat. "My saints are perhaps nearer than yours ; and, before the close of this day, you will have reason to repent such extravagant opinions. I do not understand them."

"Till now, you never disapproved them."

"I allowed them in your infancy," replied the Countess, "because I thought they went no farther than a minstrel's song ; but since they are become so dangerous, I rue the hour in which I complied with the entreaties of Sir Richard Maitland, and permitted you and your sister to remain at Thirlestane, to imbibe these romantic ideas from the wizard of Ercildown.* Had not Sir Richard been your own mother's father, I would not have been so easily prevailed on ; and thus am I rewarded for my indulgence."

"I hope, my dear madam," said Helen, wishing to soften the displeasure of her stepmother — "I hope you will never be ill rewarded for that indulgence, either by my grandfather, my sister, or myself. Isabella, in the quiet of Thirlestane, has no chance of giving you the offence that I do ; and I am forced to offend you, because I cannot disobey my conscience." A tear stood in the eye of Lady

* Few personages are so renowned in tradition as Thomas of Ercildown, usually called *The Rhymcr*. He was a poet and a sage, and believed by his contemporaries to be a prophet. He was born at Ercildown, a village on the Leeder (or Lauder), where the ruins of his paternal castle, called Learmont Tower, still remain.

Helen. "Cannot you, dear Lady Mar," continued she, forcing a smile, "pardon the daughter of your early friend, my mother, who loved you as a sister. Cannot you forgive your Helen for revering justice, even more than your favour?"

More influenced by the sweet humility of her daughter-in-law than by the ingenuous eloquence with which she maintained her sentiments, or with the appeal to the memory of the first Lady Mar, the Countess relaxed the frigid air she had assumed; and kissing her, with many renewed injunctions to bless the hand that might put a final stop to so ruinous an enthusiasm in her family, she quitted the room.

As soon as Helen was alone, she forgot the narrow-minded arguments of the Countess; and calling to recollection the generous permission with which her father had endowed her the night before, she wrapped herself in her mantle, and, attended by her page, proceeded to the armoury. The armourer was already there; having just given out arms for three hundred men, who, by the Earl's orders, were to assemble by noon on Bothwell Moor.

Helen told the man she came for the best suit of armour in his custody—"one of the most excellent proof."

He drew from an oaken chest a coat of black mail, studded with gold. Helen admired its strength and beauty. "It is the richest in all Scotland," answered he; "and was worn by our great Canmore in all his victories."

"Then it is worthy its destination. Bring it, with its helmet and sword, to my apartment."

The armourer took it up; and, accompanied by the page carrying the lighter parts, followed her into the western tower.

When Helen was again alone, it being yet very early in the morning, she employed herself in pluming the casque, and forming the scarf she meant should adorn her present. Thus time flew, till the sand-glass told her it was the eighth hour. But ere she had finished her task, she was roused from the profound stillness in which that part of the castle lay, by the doleful lament of the troop returning from Ellerslie.

She dropped the half-formed scarf from her hand ; and listened, without daring to draw her breath, to the deep-toned lamentations. She thought that she had never before heard the dirge of her country so piercing, so thrillingly awful.—Her head fell on the armour and scarf. “ Sweet lady !” sighed she to herself, “ who is it that dares thus invade thy duties ! — But my gratitude — gratitude to thy once-loved lord, will not offend thy pure spirit !” Again the mournful wailings rose on the air ; and with a convulsion of feelings she could not restrain, she threw herself on her knees, and leaning her head on the newly adorned helmet, wept profusely.

Murray entered the room unobserved. “ Helen ! my dear cousin !” cried he. She started, and rising, apologised for her tears by owning the truth. He now told her, that the body of the deceased lady was deposited in the chapel of the castle ; and that the priests from the adjacent priory, only awaited her presence, to consign it, with the church’s rites, to its tomb.

Helen retired for a few minutes to recover herself ; and then re-entering, covered with a black veil, was led by her cousin to the awful scene.

The bier lay before the altar. The prior of Saint Fillan, in his holy vestments, stood at its head ; a band of monks were ranged on each side. The maids of Lady Helen, in mourning garments, met their mistress at the portal. They had wrapped the beautiful corpse in the shroud prepared for it : and now having laid it, strewn with flowers, upon the bier, they advanced to their trembling lady, expecting her to approve their services. Helen drew near — she bowed to the priests. One of the women put her hand on the pall, to uncover the once lovely face of the murdered Marion. Lady Helen hastily resisted the woman’s motion, by laying her hand also upon the pall. The chill of death, struck through the velvet, to her touch. She turned pale ; and waving her hand to the prior to begin, the bier was lowered by the priests into the tomb beneath. As it descended, Helen sunk upon her knees, and the anthem for departed souls was raised. The pealing notes, as they rose and swelled, seemed to bear up the spirit of the sainted

Marion to its native heaven; and the tears which now flowed from the eyes of Helen, as they mingled with her pious aspirations, seemed the balm of paradise descending upon her soul.

When all was over, the venerable Halbert, who had concealed his overwhelming sorrow behind a pillar, threw himself on the cold stone which for ever closed the last chamber of his mistress. With faint cries, he gave way to the woe which shook his aged bosom, and called on death to lay him low with her. The women of Lady Helen again chanted forth their melaucholy wailings for the dead; and unable longer to bear the scene, she threw herself into the arms of her cousin, and was carried in an almost insensible state to her apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

BOTHWELL DUNGEONS.

HAVING rewarded his trusty followers, with their promised war-bonnets from the hand of Helen, and despatched them onward to the foot of Cartlane craigs, to await his arrival with the larger levy; Murray proceeded to the apartment of Lord Mar, to inform him how far he had executed his commands, and to hear his future orders. He found the veteran Earl, surrounded by arms and armed men; fifty brave Scots, who were to lead the three hundred, now on the Bothwell moor, and were receiving their spears and swords, and other weapons, from the hands of their lord.

“Bear these stoutly, my gallant countrymen,” cried he, “and remember, that although the dragon * of England has burnt up your harvests, and laid our houses in ashes;—there is yet a lion in Scotland, to wither his power, and glut you with his spoil!”

He had scarcely uttered these words, when the double doors of the apartment flew open, and all eyes were blasted

* The standard of Edward I. was a golden dragon.

by the sudden sight of Lord Soulis.* A man in splendid English armour, with a train of Southron soldiers, followed this recreant Scot.

The Earl started from his couch.—“ Lord Soulis, what is the occasion of this unapprised visit ?”

“ The ensign of the liege lord of Scotland is my warrant !” replied he : “ you are my prisoner ; and in the name of King Edward of England, I take possession of this castle.”

“ Never,” cried the Earl, “ while there is a man’s arm within it.”

“ Man or woman,” returned Lord Soulis, “ must surrender to Edward. Three thousand English, have seized three hundred of your insurgents, on Bothwell moor. The castle is surrounded, and resistance impossible.—Throw down your arms, ye mutinous villains !” cried he, turning to the Scots who were present ; “ or be hanged for rebellion against your lawful sovereign !”

“ Our lawful sovereign !” returned a young man who stood near him, “ must be the enemy of Edward ; and to none else will we yield our swords !”

“ Traitor !” cried the English commander, while with a sudden, and dreadful stroke of his battle-axe, he laid the body of the generous Scot a headless corpse at his feet. A direful cry proceeded from his enraged comrades. Every sword was drawn ; and before the bewildered and soul-struck Earl could utter a word, the furies blew their most horrible blast through the chamber ; and the half frantic Mar beheld his brave Scots at one moment victorious, and in the next the floor strewn with their dead bodies. A new succession of blood-hounds had rushed in at every door ; and before the exterminating sword was allowed to rest, the whole of his faithful troops lay around him, wounded and dying. Several had fallen across his body ; having warded with their lives the strokes they believed

* William Lord Soulis was a powerful chief in the south of Scotland.— He founded pretensions to the Scottish crown, on his descent from an illegitimate daughter of Alexander II. Soulis was a traitor to his country, and so notoriously wicked, that tradition endows him with the power of infernal necromancy.— His castle of Hermitage, in Teviotdale, is still shown as the resort of malignant demons.

levelled at his. In vain his voice had called upon his men to surrender — in vain he had implored the iron-hearted Soulis, and his coadjutor Aymer de Valence, to stop the havoc of death. All now lay in blood; and the heat of the room, thronged by the victors, became so intolerable, that De Valence, for his own sake, ordered the Earl to be removed into another apartment.

Meanwhile, unconscious of these events, Helen had lain down on her bed, to seek a few minutes' repose; and having watched the whole of the preceding night, was sunk into a profound sleep.

Murray, who was present at the abrupt entrance of the enemy, no sooner heard them declare that the castle was surrounded by a comparatively large army, than he foresaw all would be lost. On the instant, and before the dreadful signal of carnage was given in the fall of the young Scot, he slid behind the canopy of his uncle's couch; and lifting the arras, by a back-door, which led to some private rooms, hastily made his way to the chamber of his cousin. As he hurried along, he heard a fearful shout. He paused for a moment, but thinking it best, whatever might have happened, to secure the safety of Helen, he flew onward, and entered her room. She lay upon the bed in a deep sleep. "Awake! Helen," cried he; "for your life awake!"

She opened her eyes; but, without allowing her time to speak, he hastily added, "The castle is full of armed men, led hither by the English commander Aymer de Valence, and the execrable Soulis. Unless you fly through the vaulted passage, you will be their prisoner."

Helen gazed at him full of terror:—"Where is my father? Leave him, I cannot."

"Fly, in pity to your father! Oh, do not hesitate! What will be his anguish, should you fall into the hands of the furious man whose love you have rejected—when it will no longer be in the power of a parent to preserve your person from the outrages of his eager and avengeful passion. If you had seen Soulis's threatening eyes—" He was interrupted by a clamour in the opposite gallery, and the shrieks of women. Helen grasped his arm: "Alas, my

poor damsels! I will go with you—whither you will, to be far from him.”

As Murray threw his arm about her waist, to impel her failing steps, his eyes fell on the banner and the suit of armour.

“All else must be left,” exclaimed he, seizing the banner; and hurrying Helen forward, he hastened with her down the stairs which led from the western watch-tower to the vaults beneath the castle. On entering the first cellar, to which a dim light was admitted through a small grating near the top, he looked around for the archway that contained the avenue of their release. Having descried it, and raised one of the large flags which paved the floor, he assisted his affrighted cousin down a short flight of steps, into the secret passage:—“This,” whispered he, “will carry us in a direct line to the cell of the prior of St. Fillan.”

“But what will become of my father, and Lady Mar? This flight, while they are in danger—Oh! I fear to complete it!”

“Rather fear the libertine Soulis,” returned Murray: “he can only make them prisoners; and even that injury shall be of short duration; I will soon join the brave Wallace, and then, my sweet cousin, liberty, and a happy meeting!”

“Alas, his venerable harper!” cried she, suddenly recollecting Halbert; “should he be discovered to have belonged to Wallace, he, too, will be massacred by these merciless men.”

Murray stopped. “Have you courage to remain in this darkness alone? If so, I will seek him, and he shall accompany us.”

Helen had courage for any thing but the dangers Murray might encounter, by returning into the castle; but the generous youth had entered too fully into her apprehensions concerning the old man to be withheld. “Should I be delayed in coming back,” said he, recollecting the possibility of himself being attacked and slain, “go forward to the end of this passage: it will lead you to a flight of stairs;

ascend them ; and by drawing the bolt of a door, you will find yourself at once in the prior's cell."

"Talk not of delay," replied Helen ; — "return quickly, and I will await you at the entrance of the passage." So saying, she swiftly retraced with him her steps to the bottom of the stone stairs by which they had descended. He raised the flag, sprung out of the aperture, and closing it down, left her in solitude and darkness.

Murray passed through the first cellar, and was proceeding to the second (amongst the catacombs of which lay the concealed entrance to the private stairs), when he saw the great gates of the cellar open, and a large party of English soldiers enter. They were conducted by the butler of the castle, who seemed to perform his office very unwillingly, while they crowded in, thirsty, and riotous.

Aware how unequal his single arm would be, to contend with such numbers, Murray, at the first glance of these plunderers, retreated behind a heap of casks in a remote corner. While the trembling butler was loading a dozen of the men with flasks for the refreshment of their masters above, the rest were helping themselves from the adjacent catacombs. Some left the cellars with their booty, and others remained to drink it on the spot. Glad to escape the insults of the soldiers, who lay wallowing in the wine, Bothwell's old servant quitted the cellar, with the last company which bore flagons to their comrades above.

Murray listened anxiously, in hopes of hearing from his garrulous neighbours some intimation of the fate of his uncle and aunt. He hearkened in vain, for nothing was uttered by these intoxicated banditti, but loud boastings of the number each had slain in the Earl's apartment ; execrations against the Scots for their obstinate resistance ; and a thousand sanguinary wishes, that the nation had but one neck, which they might destroy at a single blow.

How often, during this conversation, was Murray tempted to rush out amongst them, and seize a desperate revenge ! But the thought of his poor cousin, now awaiting his return, and perhaps already suffering dreadful alarms from such extraordinary uproar, restrained him ; and unable to move from his hiding place, without precipitating himself

into instant death, he remained nearly an hour in the most painful anxiety, watching the dropping to sleep of this horrid crew, one by one.

When all seemed hushed—not a voice, even in a whisper, startling his ear—he ventured forth, with a stealing step, towards the slumbering group. Like his brave ancestor, Gaul, the son of Morni, “he disdained to stab a sleeping foe!” He must pass them, to reach the private stairs. He paused, and listened. Silence still reigned; not even a hand moved, so deeply were they sunk in the fumes of wine. He took courage, and flew with the lightness of air to the secret door. As he laid his hand on it, it opened from without, and two persons appeared. By the few rays which gleamed from the expiring torches of the sleepers, he could see that the first wore English armour. Murray believed himself lost; but determined to sell his life dearly, he made a spring, and caught the man by the throat; when some one seizing his arm, exclaimed—“Stop, my Lord Murray! it is the faithful Grimsby.” Murray let go his hold, glad to find that both his English friend, and the venerable object of his solicitude, were thus providentially brought to meet him; but fearing that the violence of his action, and Halbert’s exclamation, might have alarmed the sleeping soldiers, (who, drunk as they were, were too numerous to be resisted,) he laid his finger on the lip of Grimsby, and motioned to the astonished pair to follow him.

As they advanced, they perceived one of the soldiers move, as if disturbed. Murray held his sword over the sleeping wretch, ready to plunge it into his heart should he attempt to rise: but he became still again; and the fugitives having approached the flag, Murray drew it up, and eager to haven his double charge, he thrust them together down the stairs. At that moment, a shriek from Helen, (who had discovered, by the gleam of light which burst into the vault, a man descending in English armour,) echoed through the cellars. Two of the soldiers jumped upon their feet, and rushed upon Murray. He had let the flag drop behind him; but still remaining by it, in case of an opportunity to escape, he received the strokes of their

weapons upon his target, and returned them with equal rapidity. One assailant lay gasping at his feet. But the clashing of arms, and the cries of the survivor, had already awakened the whole crew. With horrid menaces, they threw themselves towards the young Scot; and would certainly have cut him to pieces, had he not snatched the only remaining torch out of the hand of a staggering soldier, and extinguished it under his foot. Bewildered where to find their prey, with threats and imprecations, they groped in darkness, slashing the air with their swords, and not unfrequently wounding each other in the vain search.

Murray was now far from their pursuit. He had no sooner put out the light, than he pulled up the flag, and leaping down, drew it after him, and found himself in safety. Desperate as was the contest, it had been short; for he yet heard the footsteps of the panic-struck Helen, flying along the passage. The Englishman and Halbert, on the first falling of the flag, not knowing its spring, had unsuccessfully tried to re-raise it, that they might assist Murray in the tumult above. On his appearing again so unexpectedly, they declared their joy; but the young lord, impatient to calm the apprehensions of his cousin, returned no other answer than "Follow me!" while he darted forward. Terror had given her wings; and even prevented her hearing the low sounds of Murray's voice, which he durst not raise to a higher pitch, for fear of being overheard by the enemy.—Thus, while she lost all presence of mind, he did not come up with her, till she fell breathless against the stairs at the extremity of the vault.

CHAPTER X.

ST. FILLAN'S.

As soon as Murray found her within his arms, he clasped her insensible form to his breast, and carrying her up the steps, drew the bolt of the door. It sprung open, and dis-

covered a large monastic cell, into which the daylight shone through one long narrow window. A straw pallet, an altar, and a marble basin, were the furniture. The cell was solitary, the owner being then at mass in the chapel of the monastery. Murray laid down his death-like burden on the monk's bed. He then ventured (believing, as it was to restore so pure a being to life, it could not be sacrilege) to throw some of the holy water upon his cousin's face; and by means of a little chalice, which stood upon the altar, he poured some into her mouth. At last, opening her eyes, she recognised the figure of her young kinsman leaning over her. The almost paralysed Halbert stood at her feet. "Blessed Virgin! am I yet safe, and with my dear Andrew! Oh! I feared you were slain!" cried she, bursting into tears.

"Thank God, we are both safe," answered he: "comfort yourself, my beloved cousin! you are now on holy ground; this is the cell of the prior of St. Fillan. None but the hand of an infidel dare wrest you from this sanctuary."

"But my father and Lady Mar?" And again her tears flowed.

"The Countess, my gracious lady," answered Halbert, "since you could not be found in the castle, is allowed to accompany your father to Dumbarton castle. They are to be treated with every respect, until De Valence receives further orders from King Edward."

"But for Wallace!" cried she, "ah, where, then, are the succours we were to send to him! And without succours, how can he, or you, dearest Andrew, rescue my father from this tyranny!"

"Do not despair," replied Murray; "look but at the banner you held fast, even while insensible; your own hands have engraven my answer—*God armeth the patriot!*—Convinced of that, can you still fear for your father? No; I will join Wallace to-morrow; your own fifty warriors await me at the bottom of Cartlane craigs; and if any treachery should be meditated against my uncle, that moment we will rase the towers of Dumbarton to their foundation."

Helen's reply was a deep sigh : she thought it might be Heaven's will that her father, like the good Lord Douglas, should fall a victim to royal revenge ; and so sad were her forebodings, that she hardly dared to hope what the sanguine disposition of her cousin promised. Grimsby now came forward ; and unloosing an iron box from under his arm, put it into the hands of Lord Murray.

" This fatal treasure," said he, " was committed to my care by the Earl your uncle, to deliver to the prior of St. Fillan's."

" What does it contain ?" demanded Murray : " I never saw it before."

" I know not its contents," returned the soldier ; " it belongs to Sir William Wallace."

" Indeed !" ejaculated Helen : " If it be treasure, why was it not rather sent to him ?" — " But how, honest soldier," asked Murray, " could you escape with it, and Halbert too ? I am at a loss to conjecture, but by miracle." He replied, that as soon as the English, and their Scottish partisans, under Lord Soulis, had surprised the castle, he saw that his only chance of safety was to throw off the bonnet and plaid, and mix amongst the numerous soldiers who had taken possession of the gates. His armour, and his language, showed he was their countryman ; and they easily believed, that he had joined the plunderers as a volunteer from the army, which, at a greater distance, beleaguered the castle. The story of his desertion from the Lanark garrison had not yet reached those of Glasgow and Dumbarton ; and one or two men, who had known him in former expeditions, readily reported that he had been drafted into the present one. Their recognition warranted his truth ; and he had no difficulty, after the carnage in the state apartment, to make his way to the bed-chamber where Lord Aymer de Valence had ordered Lord Mar to be carried. He found the Earl alone, and lost in grief. He knew not but that his nephew, and even his daughter and wife, had fallen beneath the impetuous swords of the enemy. Astonished at seeing the soldier walking at large, he expressed his surprise with some suspicions. But Grimsby told him the stratagem he had used, and assured him, Lord

Andrew had not been seen since the onset. This information inspired the Earl with a hope that his nephew might have escaped: and when the soldier also said, that he had seen the Countess led by Lord Soulis across the hall towards the Lady Helen's apartments, while he overheard him promising them every respect, the Earl seemed comforted. "But how," enquired he of Grimsby, "has this hard fate befallen us? Have you learnt how De Valence knew that I meant to take up arms for my country?"

When the soldier was relating this part of the conference, Murray interrupted him with the same demand.

"On that head I cannot fully satisfy you," replied he; "I could only gather from the soldiers, that a sealed packet had been delivered to Lord Aymer de Valence late last night at Dumbarton castle. Soulis was then there; and he immediately set off to Glasgow, for the followers he had left in that town. Early this morning he joined De Valence, and his legions on Bothwell moor. The consequences there, you know. But they do not end at Bothwell: the gallant Wallace —"

At that name, so mentioned, the heart of Helen grew cold —

"What of him?" exclaimed Murray.

"No personal harm has yet happened to Sir William Wallace," replied Grimsby; "but at the same moment in which De Valence gave orders for his troops to march to Bothwell, he sent others to intercept that persecuted knight's escape from the Cartlane craigs."

"That accursed sealed packet," cried Murray, "has been the traitor! Some villain in Bothwell castle must have written it. Whence else could have come the information? And if so," added he, with tremendous emphasis, "may the blast of slavery ever pursue him and his posterity!"

Helen shuddered, as the amen to this frightful malediction was echoed by the voices of Halbert and the soldier. The latter continued: —

"When I informed Lord Mar of these measures against Wallace, he expressed a hope that your first detachment to his assistance, might, with yourself perhaps at its head,

elude their vigilance, and join his friend. This discourse reminded him of the iron box. 'It is in that closet,' said he, pointing to an opposite door; 'you will find it beneath the little altar, before which I pay my daily duties to the Allwise Dispenser of the fates of men; else where would be my confidence now! take it thence, and buckle it to your side.'

"I obeyed; and he then proceeded:—'There are two passages in this house, which lead to sanctuary. The one nearest to us, is the safest for you. A staircase from the closet you have just left, will lead you directly into the chapel. When there, hasten to the image of the Virgin, and slip aside the marble tablet on the back of the pedestal: it will admit you to a flight of steps; descend them, and at the bottom you will find a door, that will convey you into a range of cellars. Lift up the largest flag stone in the second, and you will be conducted through a dark vault, to an iron door; draw the bolt, and remain in the cell it will open to you, till the master enters. He is the prior of St. Fillan's, and a Murray. Give him this golden cross, which he well knows, as a mark you come from me; and say it is my request, that he assist you to gain the seashore. As for the iron box, tell him to preserve it as he would his life: and never to give it up but to myself, my children, or to Sir William Wallace, its rightful owner.'"

"Alas!" cried Halbert, "that he had never been its owner! that he had never brought it to Ellerslie, to draw down misery on his head!—Ill-omened trust! whatever it contains, its presence carries blood and sorrow in its train. Wherever it has been deposited, war and murder have followed:—I trust my dear master will never see it more!"

"He may indeed never see it more!" murmured Helen, in a low voice: "Where are now my gay anticipations of freedom to Scotland? Alas, Andrew," said she, taking his hand, and weeping over it; "I have been too presumptuous;—my father is a prisoner, and Sir William Wallace is lost!"

"Cease, my dear Helen," cried he; "cease to distress yourself!—These are merely the vicissitudes of the

great contention we are engaged in. We must expect occasional disappointments, or look for miracles every day. Such disasters are sent as lessons, to teach us precaution, promptitude, and patience—these are the soldier's graces, my sweet cousin, and depend on it, I will pay them due obedience."

"But why," asked Helen, taking comfort from the un-subdued spirits of her cousin, "why, my good soldier, did not my dear father take advantage of this sanctuary?"

"I urged the Earl to accompany me," returned Grimsby; "but he said, such a proceeding would leave his wife and babes in unprotected captivity. 'No,' added he; 'I will await my fate; for the God of those who trust in him, knows that I do not fear!'

"Having received such peremptory orders from the Earl, I took my leave; and entering the chapel by the way he directed, was agreeably surprised to find the worthy Halbert; whom, never having seen since the funeral obsequies, I supposed had fallen during the carnage in the state chamber. He was still kneeling by the tomb of his buried mistress. I did not take long to warn him of his danger, and desired him to follow me. We descended together beneath the holy statue; and were just emerging into the cellars, when you, sir, met us at the entrance.

"It was while we were yet in the chapel, that I heard De Valence, and Soulis, at high words in the court-yard. The former, in a loud voice, gave orders that as Lady Helen Mar could no where be found, the Earl and Countess, with their two infant children, should not be separated, but conveyed as his prisoners to Dumbarton castle."

"That is a comfort," cried Helen; "my father will then be consoled by the presence of his wife."

"But very different would have been the case, madam, had you appeared," rejoined the soldier: "one of Lord de Valence's men told me, that Lord Soulis intended to have taken you, and the Countess, to Dun-glass castle, near Glasgow; while the sick earl was to have been carried alone to Dumbarton, and detained in solitary confinement. Lord Soulis was in so dreadful a rage, when you could not be found, that he accused the English commander of having

leagued with Lady Mar to deceive him. In the midst of this contention, we descended into the vaults."

Helen shuddered at the thought of how near she was to falling into the hands of so fierce a spirit. In his character, he united every quality which could render power formidable; combining prodigious bodily strength, with cruelty, dissimulation, and treachery. He was feared by the common people, as a sorcerer; and avoided by the virtuous of his own rank, as an enemy to all public law, and the violator of every private tie. Helen Mar had twice refused his hand: first, during the contest for the kingdom, when his pretended claim to the crown was disallowed. She was then a mere child, hardly more than fourteen; but she rejected him with abhorrence.—Though stung to the quick, at being denied the objects, both of his love, and of his ambition, at the same moment; he did not hesitate at another period, to renew his offers to her. At the fall of Dunbar, when he again founded his uprising on the ruins of his country, as soon as he had repeated his oaths of fidelity to Edward, he hastened to Thirlestane, to throw himself a second time at the feet of Lady Helen.—Her ripened judgment, confirmed her youthful dislike of his ruffian qualities, and again he was rejected.

"By the powers of hell," exclaimed he, when the project of surprising Bothwell was imparted to him, "if I once get that proud minion into my grasp, she shall be mine as I will; and learn to beg for even a look from the man who has humbled her!"

Helen knew not half the afflictions, with which his resentful heart had meditated to subdue and torture her; and therefore, though she shrunk at the sound of a name so generally infamous, yet, not aware of all the evils she had escaped, she replied with languor, though with gratitude, to the almost rapturous congratulations of her cousin on her timely flight.

At this period, the door of the cell opened, and the prior entered from the cloisters—he started on seeing his room filled with strangers. Murray took off his helmet, and approached him. On recognising the son of his patron, the prior enquired his commands; and expressed some surprise,

that such a company, and above all, a lady, could have passed the convent-gate without his previous notice.

Murray pointed to the recess behind the altar ; and then explained to the good priest, the necessity which had compelled them to thus seek the protection of Saint Fillan. "Lady Helen," continued he, "must share your care, until Heaven empowers the Earl of Mar to reclaim his daughter, and adequately reward this holy church."

The soldier then presented the cross, with the iron box ; repeating the message that confided them also to his keeping.

The prior listened to these recitals with sorrowful attention. He had heard the noise of armed men advancing to the castle ; but knowing that the Earl was making warlike preparations, he had no suspicion that these were other than the Bothwell soldiers. He took the box, and laying it on the altar, pressed the cross to his lips.— "The Earl of Mar shall find that fidelity here, which his faith in the church merits.— That mysterious chest, to which you tell me so terrible a denunciation is annexed, shall be preserved sacred as the relics of Saint Fillan."

Halbert groaned heavily at these words, but he did not speak. The father looked at him attentively, and then proceeded :— "And for you, virtuous Southron, I will give you a pilgrim's habit. Travel in that privileged garb to Montrose ; and there a brother of the church, the prior of Aberbrothick will, by a letter from me, convey you in a vessel to Normandy : thence you may safely find your way to Guienne."

The soldier bowed his head ; and the priest, turning to Lady Helen, told her, that a cell should be appointed for her ; and some pious woman brought from the adjoining hamlet, to pay her due attendance.

"As for this venerable man," continued he, "his silver hairs already proclaim him near his heavenly country ! He had best put on the cowl of the holy brotherhood ; and, in the arms of religion, repose securely, till he passes through the sleep of death to wake in everlasting life."

Tears started into the eyes of Halbert. "I thank you, reverend father ; I have indeed drawn near the end of my pilgrimage—too old to serve my dear master in fields of

blood and hardship, I will at least devote my last hours in uniting my prayers with his, and all good souls, for the repose of his lady—I accept your invitation with gratitude; and, considering it a call from Heaven to give me rest, I shall welcome the day that marks the poor harper of Ellerslie with the sacred tonsure.”

The sound of approaching trumpets; and, soon after, the clattering of horses, and the clang of armour, made an instantaneous silence in the cell.—Helen looked fearfully at her cousin, and grasped his hand; Murray clasped his sword with a firmer hold—“I will protect you with my life.” He spoke in a low tone, but the soldier heard him: “There is no cause of alarm,” rejoined he; “Lord de Valence is only marching by, in his way to Dumbarton.”

“Alas, my poor father!” cried Helen, covering her face with her hands.

The venerable prior pitying her affliction, knelt down by her: “My daughter be comforted,” said he, “they dare not commit any violence on the Earl. King Edward too well understands his own interest, to allow even a long imprisonment to so popular a nobleman.” This assurance, assisted by the consolations of a firm trust in God, at length raised her head with a meek smile. He continued to speak of the impregnable hopes of the Christian, who founds his confidence on Omnipotence; and while his words spread a serenity through her soul, that seemed the ministration of a descended saint, she closed her hands over her breast, and silently invoked the protection of the Almighty Jehovah, for her suffering parent.

The prior, seeing her composed, recommended leaving her to rest. And Helen, comforted by holy meditations, allowing them to depart, he led Murray and his companions into the convent library.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHAPTER-HOUSE.

THE march of De Valence from the castle, having proved that no suspicion of any of its late inhabitants being still in the neighbourhood, remained with its usurpers, Grimsby thought he might depart in safety, and next morning he begged permission of the prior to commence his journey. —“ I am anxious to quit a land,” said he, “ where my countrymen are committing violences, which make me blush at the name of Englishman.”

Murray put a purse of gold into the soldier's hand, while the prior covered his armour with a pilgrim's gown. Grimsby, with a respectful bow, returned the gift: “ I cannot take money from you, my Lord.—But bestow on me the sword at your side, and that I will preserve for ever.”

Murray took it off, and gave it to the soldier. “ Let us exchange, my brave friend!” said he: “ give me yours; and it shall be a memorial to me of having found virtue in an Englishman.”

Grimsby unlocked his rude weapon in a moment, and as he put the iron hilt into the young Scot's hand a tear stood in his eye: “ When you raise this sword against my countrymen, think on Grimsby, a faithful, though humble soldier of the cross, and spare the blood of all who ask for mercy.”

Murray looked a gracious assent; for the tear of mercy was infectious. Without speaking, he gave the good soldier's hand a parting grasp; and with regret, that superior claims called so brave a man from his side, he saw him leave the monastery.*

The mourner banquets on memory; making that which seems the poison of life its aliment. During the hours of regret, we recall the images of departed joys; and in weep-

* Grimsby is recorded as having been originally in the service of the King of England. His after attachment to Wallace is also mentioned as a matter of fact. — Most of the followers of the knight of Ellerslie, which are particularised in these volumes, are named from authority. Stephen Ireland, “ the veteran of Largs,” makes an eminent figure in the epic song of “ Ye Actis and Deidis of ye Vailzeand, Campioun Shyr Wilham Wallace.”

ing over each tender remembrance, tears so softly shed embalm the wounds of grief. To be denied the privilege of pouring forth our love, and our lamentations, over the grave of one who in life was our happiness, is to shut up the soul of the survivor in a solitary tomb, where the bereaved heart pines in secret, till it breaks with the fulness of uncommunicated sorrow:—but listen to the mourner; give his feelings way; and, like the river rolling from the hills into the valley, they will flow with a gradually gentler stream, till they become lost in time's wide ocean.

So Murray judged, when the poor old harper, finding himself alone with him, again gave loose to his often recapitulated griefs. He wept like an infant; and recounting the afflictions of his master, while bewailing the disasters at Bothwell, implored Murray to go without delay to support the now almost friendless Wallace. Murray was consoling him with the assurance that he would set off for the mountains that very evening, when the prior returned to conduct Halbert to a cell appointed for his noviciate. The good priest had placed one of his most pious fathers there, to administer both temporal and spiritual cordials to the aged sufferer.

The sorrowing domestic of Wallace being thus disposed of, the prior and Murray remained together, consulting on the safest means of passing to the Cartlane hills. A lay-brother, whom the prior had sent in pursuit of Helen's fifty warriors, to apprise them of the English being in the craigs, at this juncture entered the library. He informed the father, that, secure in his religious garb, he had penetrated many of the Cartlane defiles, but could neither see nor hear any thing of the party.—Every glen or height was occupied by the English; and from a woman, of whom he begged a draught of milk, he had learnt how closely the mountains were invested. The English commander, in his zeal to prevent provisions being conveyed to Wallace and his famishing garrison, had stopped a procession of monks, bearing a dead body to the sepulchral cave of Saint Columba.—He would not allow them to ascend the heights, until he had examined whether the bier really bore the

corpse, or was a vehicle to carry food to the beleaguered Scots.

In the midst of this information, the prior and his friends were startled by a shout, and soon after a tumult of voices, in which might be distinguished the cry of "Hang the traitor!"

"Our brave Englishman has fallen into their hands," cried Murray, hastening towards the door.

"What would you do?" interrupted the prior, holding him: "Your single arm could not save the soldier.—The cross has more power; I will seek these violent men: meanwhile stay here, as you value the lives of all in the convent."

Murray had now recollected himself, and acquiesced. The prior took the crucifix from the altar, and ordering the porter to throw open the great doors (near which the incessant shouting seemed to proceed), he appeared before a turbulent band of soldiers, whom he saw dragging a man along, fast bound with their leathern belts. Blood, trickling from his face, fell on the hands of the ruthless wretches, who, with horrid yells, were threatening him with instant death.

The prior, raising the cross, rushed in amongst them; and, in the name of the blessed Son who died on that tree, bade them stand! The soldiers trembled before the holy majesty of his figure, and at his awful adjuration. The prior looked on the prisoner, but he did not see the dark locks of the Englishman; it was the yellow hair of Scotland that mingled with the blood on his forehead.

"Whither do you hurry that wounded man?"

"To his death," answered a surly fellow.

"What is his offence?"

"He is a traitor."

"How has he proved it?"

"He is a Scot; and he belongs to the disloyal Lord of Mar.—This bugle, with its crowned falcon, proves it," added the soldier, holding up the very bugle which the Earl had sent by Halbert to Wallace; and which was ornamented with the crest of Mar, wrought in gold.

"That this has been Lord Mar's," replied the prior,

“there is no doubt; but may not this man have found it? — Or may it not have been given to him by the Earl, before that chief incurred the displeasure of King Edward? Which of you would think it just to be made to die, because your friend was condemned to the scaffold? Unless you substantiate your charge against this man, by a better proof than his bugle, his death would be a murder, which the Lord of life will requite, in the perdition of your souls.” As the father spoke, he again elevated the cross: the men turned pale.

“I am a minister of Christ,” continued he, “and must be the friend of justice. Release, therefore, that wounded man to me. Before the altar of the Searcher of all hearts, he shall confess himself; and if I find that he is guilty unto death, I promise you by the holy St. Fillan, to release him to your commanding officer; and so let justice take its course. But if he prove innocent, I am the soldier of Christ; and no monarch on earth shall wrest his children from the protection of the church.”

While he spake, the men who held the prisoner, let go their hold; and the prior, stretching out his hand to him, gave him to a party of monks, to conduct into the convent. Then to convince the soldiers, that it was the man's life he sought to save, and not the spoil, he returned the golden bugle, and bade them depart in peace.

Awed by the father's address, and satisfied with the money and arms of which they had rifled the stranger, the marauders retreated; determining, indeed, to say nothing of the matter to the officer in the castle, lest he should demand the horn; and, elated with their present booty, they marched off to pursue their plundering excursion. Bursting into yeomen's houses, or peasants' huts, stripping all of their substance, who did, or did not, swear fealty to Edward; thus robbing the latter, and exacting contributions from the former; while vain prayers for mercy, and unanswered cries for redress, echoed dolefully through the vale of Bothwell; they sped gaily on, as if murder were pastime, and rapine honour.

The prior, on returning into the convent, ordered the gates to be bolted. When he entered the chapter-house,

finding the monks had already bound up the wounds of the stranger, he made a sign for the brethren to withdraw; and then approaching the young man — “ My son,” said he, in a mild tone, “ you heard my declaration to the men from whom I took you ! — Answer me with truth ; and you shall find, that virtue, or repentance, have alike a refuge in the arms of the church. As I am its servant, no man needs fear to confide in me. — Speak with candour ! — How came you by that bugle ? ”

The stranger looked steadfastly on his questioner : — “ A minister of the all-righteous God cannot mean to deceive. You have saved my life, and I should be less than man, could I doubt the evidence of that deed. I received that bugle from a brave Scot, who dwells amongst the eastern mountains ; and who gave it to me, to assure the Earl of Mar that I came from him.”

The prior apprehended that it was of Wallace he spoke : “ You come to request a military aid from the Earl of Mar ! ” rejoined the father, willing to sound him, before he committed Murray, by calling him to the conference.

The stranger replied : “ If, reverend sir, you are in the confidence of the good Earl, pronounce but the Christian name of the man who charged me with the bugle, and allow me then, for his sake, to ask you, what has indeed happened to the Earl ? that I was seized by foes when I expected to meet with friends only ! — Reply to this, and I shall speak freely ; but at present, though I would confide all of myself to your sacred character, yet the confidence of others, is not mine to bestow.”

The prior, being convinced by this caution, that he was indeed speaking with some messenger from Wallace, made no hesitation to answer — “ Your master is a knight, and a braver never drew breath, since the time of his royal namesake, William the Lion ! ”

The man rose hastily from his seat, and falling on his knees before the prior, put his garment to his lips : — “ Father, I now know that I am with a friend of my persecuted master ! But if, indeed, the situation of Lord Mar precludes assistance from him, all hope is lost ! The noble Wallace is penned within the hills without any hopes of

escape. Suffer me, then, thou venerable saint! to rejoin him immediately, that I may at least die with my friend!"

"Hope for a better destiny," returned the prior; "I am a servant, and not to be worshipped: turn to that altar, and kneel to Him who can alone send the succour you need."

The good man, thinking it was now time to call the young lord of Bothwell, by a side door from the chapter-house entered the library, where Murray was anxiously awaiting his return. On his entrance, the impatient youth eagerly exclaimed, "Have you rescued him?"

"Grimsbey, I hope, is far and safely on his journey," answered he; "but the man those murderers were dragging to death is in the chapter-house. Follow me, and he will give you news of Wallace."

Murray gladly obeyed.

At sight of a Scottish knight in armour, the messenger of Wallace thought his prayers were answered, and that he saw before him the leader of the host which was to march to the preservation of his brave commander. Murray told him who he was, and learnt from him in return, that Wallace now considered himself in a state of siege; that the women, children, and old men, with him, had nothing to feed on but wild strawberries and birds' eggs, which they found in the hollows of the rocks. "To relieve them from such hard quarters," continued the narrator, "is his first wish; but that cannot be effected by our small number, who, to do it, must fight our way through a strong barrier of English soldiers. However, he would make the attempt by a stratagem, could we be at all supported by succours from the Earl of Mar!"

"My uncle's means," replied Murray, "are for a time cut off; but mine shall be exerted to the utmost. Did you not meet, somewhere, a company of Scots to the number of fifty? I sent them off yesterday to the support of our gallant friend."

"No," rejoined the young man; "I fear they have been taken by the enemy; for in my way to Sir William Wallace, not knowing the English were so close to his sanctuary, I was nearly seized myself.—I had not the good fortune to be with him, when he struck the first

blow for Scotland in the citadel of Lanark; but as soon as I heard the tale of his wrongs, and that he had retired in arms towards the Cartlane craigs, I determined to follow his fate. We had been companions in our boyish days, and friends after. He saved my life once in swimming, and now that a formidable nation menaces his, I seek to repay the debt. For this purpose, a few nights ago, I left my guardian's house by stealth, and sought my way to my friend. I found the banks of the Mouse occupied by the English, but exploring the most intricate passages, at last gained the bottom of the precipice on the top of which Wallace is encamped; and as I lay watching an opportunity to ascend, I perceived two English soldiers through the bushes. They were in discourse, and from them I learnt, that besides Heselrigge himself, nearly two hundred of his garrison had fallen by the hand of Wallace's men in the contention at the castle. The tidings were sent to Sir Richard Arnulff, the deputy-governor of Ayr, and he despatched a thousand men to surround Cartlane craigs, spies having given notice that they were Sir William's strong holds; and the orders were that he should be taken dead or alive, while his adherents, men and women, should receive no quarter.

“Such was the information I brought to my gallant friend, when in the dead of night I mounted the rock, and calling to the Scottish centinel in Gaelic, gave him my name, and was allowed to enter that sacred spot. Wallace welcomed his faithful Ker, and soon unfolded his distress and his hopes. He told me of the famine that threatened his little garrison; of the constant watching, day and night, necessary to prevent a surprise. But in his extremity, he observed that one defile was thinly guarded by the enemy, probably because, as it lay at the bottom of a perpendicular angle of the rock, they thought it unattainable by the Scots. To this point, however, my dauntless friend turns his eyes. He would attempt it, could he procure a sufficient number of fresh men to cover the retreat of his exhausted few. For this purpose, as I had so lately explored the most hidden paths of the craigs, I volunteered to visit the Lord Mar, and to conduct, in safety, any succours he might send to our countrymen.

“ This,” continued Ker, “ was the errand on which I came to the Earl. Think then what was my horror, when in my journey I found redoubled legions hemming in the hills; and on advancing towards Bothwell castle, was seized by a party of English, rifled, and declared an accomplice with that nobleman, who, they said, was condemned to lose his head !”

“ Not so bad as that, my good Ker,” cried Murray, a glow of indignation flushing his cheek; “ many a bull’s head * shall frown, in this land on the Southron tables, before my uncle’s neck gluts their axes! — No true Scottish blood, I trust, will ever stain their scaffolds; for while we have arms to wield a sword, he must be a fool that grounds them on any other terms than freedom or death. We have cast our lives on the die, and Wallace’s camp or the *narrow house* must be our prize !”

“ Brave youth !” exclaimed the prior, “ may the innocence which gives animation to your courage, continue its moving soul ! They only are invincible who are as ready to die as to live; and no one can be firm in that principle whose exemplary life is not a happy preparation for the awful change.”

Murray bowed modestly to this pious encomium; and turning to Ker, informed him, that since he must abandon all hope of hearing any more of the fifty brave men his cousin Helen had sent to the craigs, he bethought him of applying to his uncle Sir John Murray, who dwelt hard by on his estate at Drumshargard. “ It is small,” said he, “ and cannot afford many men; but still he may spare sufficient to effect the escape of our commander, and that for the present will be enough.”

To accomplish his design without delay, for promptitude is the earnest of success, and to avoid a surprise from the English lieutenant at Bothwell, (who, hearing of the rencontre before the castle, might choose to demand his men’s prisoner,) Murray determined to take Ker with him, and, disguised as peasants, as soon as darkness should shroud their movements, proceed to Drumshargard.

* A bull’s head presented at a feast, was a sign that some one of the company was immediately to be put to death.

CHAPTER XII.

DRUMSHARGARD.

WHILE these transactions occupied the morning, Lady Helen (who the night before was removed to the quiet cell appointed for her) slept long and sweetly. Her exhausted frame found renovation ; and she awoke with a heavenly calm at her heart. A cheering vision had visited her sleeping thoughts ; and a trance of happy feelings absorbed her senses, while her hardly disengaged spirit still hovered over its fading images.

She had seen in her dream a young knight enter her cell, bearing her father in his arms. He laid the Earl down before her ; but as she stooped to embrace him, the knight took her by the hand, and leading her to the window of the apartment (which seemed extended to an immense size) he smiled, and said — “ Look out, and see how I have performed my vow ! ” She obeyed, and saw crowds of rejoicing people, who at sight of the young warrior raised such a shout, that Helen awoke. She started — she looked around — she was still in the narrow cell, and alone, but the rapture of beholding her father yet fluttered at her heart, and the touch of the warrior’s hand seemed still warm upon hers. “ Angels of rest,” cried she, “ I thank you for this blessed vision ! ”

The prior of St. Fillan might have read his own just sentiment in the heart of Lady Helen. While the gentlest of human beings, she was an evidence that an ardent and pious mind contains the true principles of heroism. Hope, in such a mind, treads down impossibilities ; and, regardless of impediments or dangers, rushes forward to seize the prize. In the midst of hosts, it feels a conqueror’s power ; or, when its strength fails, sees, by the eye of faith, legions of angels watching to support the natural weakness. Lady Helen knew that the cause was just which had put the sword into the hand of Wallace ; that it was virtue which had prompted her father to second him ; and where justice

is, there are the wings of the Most High stretched out as a shield !

This dream seemed prophetic: " Yes," cried she, " though thousands of Edward's soldiers surrounded my father and his friend, I should not despair. Thy life, O noble Wallace, was not given to be extinguished in an hour ! Thy morn has hardly risen, — the perfect day must come that is to develop thy greatness, — that is to prove thee, (and oh ! gracious God, grant my prayer !) the glory of Scotland ! "

Owing to the fervour of her apostrophe, she did not observe the door of the cell open, till the prior stood before her. After expressing his pleasure at the renovation in her countenance, he informed her of the departure of the English soldier ; and of the alarm which he and Murray had sustained for his safety, by the adventure which had thrown a stranger from the craigs into their protection. At the mention of that now momentous spot, she blushed ; the golden-haired warrior of her dream seemed ready to rise before her ; and with a beating heart she prepared to hear some true but miraculous account of her father's rescue.

Unconscious of what was passing in her young and eager mind, the prior calmly proceeded to relate all that Ker had told of the dangerous extremity to which Wallace was reduced, and then closed his intelligence, by mentioning the attempt which her cousin meditated to save him. The heightened colour gradually faded from the face of Helen, and low sighs were her only responses to the observations he made on the difficulty of the enterprise. But when his pity for the brave men engaged in the cause, compelled him, unthinkingly, to express his fears that the patriotic zeal of Wallace would only make him and them a sacrifice, Helen looked up ; there was inspiration on her lips and in her eyes. " Father," said she, " hast thou not taught me, that God shieldeth the patriot as well as armeth him ? "

" True," returned he with an answering smile ; " steadily believe this, and where will be the sighs you have just been breathing ? "

" Nature will shrink," replied she ; " but the Christian's hope checks her ere she falls. Pardon me then, holy father,

that I sometimes weep ; but they are often tears of trust and consolation."

" Daughter of heaven," replied the good prior, " you might teach devotion to age, and cause youth to be enamoured of the graces of religion ! Be ever thus, and you may look with indifference on the wreck of worlds."

Helen having meekly replied to this burst from the heart of the holy man, begged to see her cousin, before he set off on his expedition. The prior withdrew, and within an hour after, Murray entered the apartment. Their conversation was long, and their parting full of an interest that dissolved them both into tears. " When I see you again, my brave cousin, tell me that my father is free, and his preserver safe. Your own life, dear Andrew," added she, as he pressed his cheek to hers, " must always be precious to me."

Murray hastily withdrew, and Helen was again alone.

The young chieftain and Ker covered their armour with common plaids, and having received a thousand blessings from the prior and Halbert, proceeded under shelter of the night through the obscurest paths of the wood which divided Bothwell from Drumshargard.

Sir John Murray was gone to rest when his nephew arrived, but Lord Andrew's voice being well known by the porter, he was admitted into the house ; and leaving his companion in the dining-hall, went to the apartment of his uncle. The old knight was soon aroused ; and he welcomed his nephew with open arms ; for he had feared, from the accounts brought by the fugitive tenants of Bothwell, that he also had been carried away prisoner.

Murray now unfolded his errand : — first, to obtain a band of Sir John's trustiest people to assist in rescuing the preserver of the Earl's life from immediate destruction ; and, secondly, if a commission for Lord Mar's release did not arrive from King Edward, to aid him to free his uncle and the Countess from Dumbarton castle.

Sir John listened with growing anxiety to his nephew's details. — When he heard of Lady Helen's continuing in the convent, he highly approved it. " That is well," said he ; " to bring her to any private protection, would only

spread calamity. She might be traced, and her protector put in danger; none but the church, with safety to itself, can grant asylum to the daughter of a state prisoner."

"Then I doubly rejoice she is there," replied Murray, "and there she will remain, till your generous assistance empowers me to rescue her father."

"Lord Mar has been very rash, nephew," returned Drumshargard.* "What occasion was there for him to volunteer sending men to support Sir William Wallace? and how durst he bring ruin on Bothwell castle, by collecting, unauthorised by my brother, its vassals for so dangerous an experiment?"

Murray started at these unexpected observations. He knew his uncle was timid, but he had never suspected him of meanness; however, in consideration of the respect he owed to him as his father's brother, he smothered his disgust, and gave him a mild answer. But the old man could not approve of a nobleman of his rank running himself, his fortune, and his friends into peril, to pay any debt of gratitude; and as to patriotic sentiments being a stimulus, he treated the idea with contempt. "Trust me, Andrew," said he, "nobody profits by these notions but thieves, and desperate fellows ready to become thieves!"

"I do not understand you, sir!"

"Not understand me?" replied the knight, rather impatiently: "Who suffers in these *contests for liberty*, as you choose to call them, but such men as Lord Mar and your father? Betrayed by artful declamation, they rush into conspiracies against the existing government — are detected — ruined — and, perhaps, finally lose their lives! — Who gains by rebellion but a few pennyless wretches, that embrace these vaunted principles from the urgency of their necessities? They acquire plunder under the mask of extraordinary disinterestedness; and hazarding nothing of themselves but their worthless lives, they would make tools of the first men in the realm, and throw the whole country into flames, that they may catch a few brands from the fire!"

* It is a Scottish custom to distinguish chieftains of the same name by the title of their estates.

Young Murray felt his anger rise with this speech. — “ You do not speak to my point, sir ! — I do not come here to dispute the general evil of revolt, but to ask your assistance to snatch two of the bravest men in Scotland from the fangs of the tyrant who has made you a slave ! ”

“ Nephew ! ” cried the knight, starting from his couch, and darting a fierce look at him, “ if any man but one of my own blood had uttered that word, this hour should have been his last.”

“ Every man, sir,” continued Murray, “ who acts upon your principles, must know himself to be a slave ; — and to resent being called so, is to affront his own conscience. A name is nothing ; the fact ought to knock upon your heart, and there arouse the indignation of a Scot and a Murray. See you not the villages of your country burning around you ? The castles of your chieftains rased to the ground ? Did not the plains of Dunbar reek with the blood of your kinsmen ; and even now, do you not see them led away in chains to the strongholds of the tyrant ? Are not your stoutest vassals pressed from your service, and sent into foreign wars ? And yet you exclaim, ‘ I see no injury — I spurn at the name of slave ! ’ ”

Murray rose from his seat as he ended, and walking the room in agitation, did not perceive the confusion of his uncle, who, at once overcome with conviction and with fear, again ventured to speak : — “ It is too sure you speak truth, Andrew ; but what am I, or any other private individual, that we should make ourselves a *forlorn hope* for the whole nation ? Will Baliol, who was the first to bow to the usurper, will he thank us for losing our heads in resentment of his indignity ? Bruce himself, the rightful heir of the crown, leaves us to our fates, and has become a courtier in England ! For whom then should I adventure my grey hairs, and the quiet of my home, to seek an uncertain liberty, and to meet an almost certain death ? ”

“ For Scotland ! uncle,” replied he ; “ just laws are her right. You are her son ; and if you do not make one in the grand attempt to rescue her from the blood-hounds which tear her vitals, the guilt of parricide will be on your soul ! Think not, sir, to preserve your home, or even your

grey hairs, by hugging the chains by which you are bound. You are a Scot; and that is sufficient to arm the enemy against your property and life. Remember the fate of Lord Monteith! At the very time he was beset by the parasites of Edward, and persuaded by their flatteries to be altogether as an Englishman, in that very hour, when he had taken a niece of Cressingham's to his arms, by her hands the vengeance of Edward reached him — he fell!"

Murray saw that his uncle was struck, and that he trembled.

"But I am too insignificant, Andrew!"

"You are the brother of Lord Bothwell!" answered Murray, with all the dignity of his father rising in his countenance: "His large possessions made him a traitor in the eyes of the tyrant's representatives. Cressingham, as treasurer for the crew, has already sent his lieutenant, to lord it in our paternal castle; and do not deceive yourself in believing, that some one of his officers will not require the fertile fields of Drumshargard as a reward for his services! No, cheat not yourself with the idea that the brother of Lord Bothwell will be too insignificant to share in the honour of bearing a part in the confiscations of his country! Trust me, my uncle, the forbearance of tyrants is not that of mercy but of convenience. When they need your wealth, or your lands, your submission is forgotten, and a prison or the axe ready to give them quiet possession."

Sir John Murray, though a timid and narrow-sighted man, now fully comprehended his nephew's reasoning; and his fears taking a different turn, he hastily declared his determination to set off immediately for the Highlands. "In the morning, by day-break," said he, "I will commence my journey, and join my brother at Loch-awe; for I cannot believe myself safe a moment, while so near the garrisons of the enemy."

Murray approved this plan; and after obtaining his hard-wrung leave to take thirty men from his vassals, he returned to Ker, to inform him of the success of his mission. It was not necessary — neither would it have been agreeable to his pride — to relate the arguments which had been required to obtain this small assistance; and in the course of

an hour, he brought together the appointed number of the bravest men on the estate. When equipped, he led them into the hall, to receive the last command from their feudal lord.

On seeing them armed, with every man his drawn dirk in his hand, Sir John turned pale. Murray, with the unfolded banner of Mar in his hand, and Ker by his side, stood at their head.

“Young men,” said the old knight, striving to speak in a firm tone, “in this expedition you are to consider yourselves the followers of my nephew: he is brave and honourable, therefore I commit you to his command. But as you go on his earnest petition, I am not answerable to any man for the enterprises to which he may lead you.”

“Be they all on my own head!” cried Murray, blushing at his uncle’s pusillanimity, and drawing out his sword with an impatience that made the old knight start:—“We now have your permission to depart, sir?”

Sir John gave a ready assent: he was anxious to get so hot-headed a youth out of his house, and to collect his gold and servants, that he might commence his own flight by break of day.

It was still dark as midnight when Murray and his little company passed the heights above Drumshargard; and took their rapid, though silent, march, towards the cliffs, which would conduct them to the more dangerous passes of the Cartlane craigs.

CHAPTER XIII.

BANKS OF THE CLYDE.

Two days passed drearily away to Helen. She could not expect tidings from her cousin in so short a time. No more happy dreams cheered her lonely hours; and anxiety to learn what might be the condition of the Earl and Countess, so possessed her, that visions of affright now dis-

turbed both her waking and sleeping senses. Fancy showed them in irons, and in a dungeon; and sometimes she started in horror, thinking that perhaps at that moment the assassin's steel was raised against the life of her father.

On the morning of the third day, when she was chiding herself for such rebellious despondence, her female attendant entered, to say, that a friar was come to conduct her where she would see messengers from Lady Mar. Helen lingered not a moment, but giving her hand to the good father, was led by him into the library, where the prior was standing between two men in military habits. One wore English armour, with his visor closed; the other, a knight, was in tartans. The Scot presented her with a signet, set in gold. Helen looked on it, and immediately recognised the same that her step-mother always used.

The Scottish knight was preparing to address her, when the prior interrupted him, and taking Lady Helen's hand, made her seat herself. "Compose yourself for a few minutes," said he; "this transitory life hourly brings forward events to teach us to be calm, and to resign our wishes and our wills to the Lord of all things."

Helen looked fearfully in his face. "Some evil tidings are to be told me."—The blood left her lips, it seemed leaving her heart also. The prior, full of compassion, hesitated to speak. The Scot abruptly answered her:—

"Be not alarmed; lady, your parents have fallen into humane hands. I am sent, under the command of this noble Southron knight, to conduct you to them."

"Then my father lives! They are safe!" cried she, in a transport of joy, and bursting into tears.

"He yet lives," returned the officer; "but his wounds opening afresh, and the fatigues of his journey, have so exhausted him, that Lord Aymer de Valence has granted the prayers of the Countess, and we come to take you to receive his last blessing."

A cry of anguish burst from the heart of Lady Helen; and falling into the arms of the prior, she found refuge from woe in a merciful insensibility. The pitying exertions of the venerable father, at last recalled her to recollection, and to sorrow. She rose from the bench on which he had

laid her, and begged permission to retire for a few minutes : tears choked her further utterance ; and being led out by the friar, she once more re-entered her cell.

Lady Helen passed the moments she had requested in those duties which alone can give comfort to the afflicted, even when all that is visible bids us despair ; and rising from her knees, with that holy fortitude which none but the devout can know, she took her mantle and veil, and throwing them over her, sent her attendant to the prior, to say, that she was ready to set out on her journey, and wished to receive his parting benediction. The venerable father, followed by Halbert, obeyed her summons. On seeing the poor old harper, Helen's heart lost some of its newly acquired composure. She held out her hand to him ; he pressed it to his lips :— “ Farewell, sweetest lady ! May the prayers of the dear saint, to whose remains your pious care gave a holy grave, draw down upon your own head consolation and peace ! ” The old man sobbed ; and the tears of Lady Helen, as he bent upon her hand, dropped upon his silver hair : “ May heaven hear you, good Halbert ! And cease not, venerable man, to pray for me ; for I go into the hour of trial.”

“ All that dwell in this house, my daughter,” rejoined the prior, “ shall put up orisons for your comfort, and for the soul of the departing Earl.” Observing that her grief augmented at these words, he proceeded in a yet more soothing voice : “ Regret not that he goes before you, for what is death but entrance into life ? It is the narrow gate, which shuts us from this dark world to usher us into another, of everlasting light and happiness. Weep not, then, dear child of the church, that your earthly parents precede you to the heavenly Father ; rather say with the Virgin, Saint Bride ! ‘ How long, O Lord, am I to be banished thy presence ? How long endure the prison of my body, before I am admitted to the freedom of paradise, to the bliss of thy saints ? ’ ”

Helen raised her eyes, yet shining in tears, and with a divine smile pressing the crucifix to her breast — “ You do indeed arm me, my father ! — This is my strength ! ”

“ And one that will never fail thee ! ” exclaimed he.—

She dropped upon one knee before him. He crossed his hands over her head — he looked up to heaven — his bosom heaved — his lips moved — then pausing a moment — “Go,” said he, “and may the angels which guard innocence, minister to your sorrows, and lead you into peace !”

Helen bowed, and breathing inwardly a devout response, rose, and followed the prior out of the cell. At the end of the cloister she again bade farewell to Halbert. Before the great gates stood the knights with their attendants. She once more kissed the crucifix held by the prior, and giving her hand to the Scot, was placed by him on a horse richly caparisoned. He sprung on another himself: while the English officer, who was already mounted, drawing up to her, she pulled down her veil; and all bowing to the holy brotherhood at the porch, rode off at a gentle pace.

A long stretch of woods, which spread before the monastery, and screened the back of Bothwell castle from being discernible on that side of the Clyde, lay before them. Through this green labyrinth they pursued their way, till they crossed the river.

“Time wears !” exclaimed the Scot to his companion; “we must push on.” The English knight nodded, and set his spurs into his steed. The whole troop now fell into a rapid trot. The banks of the Aven opened into a hundred beautiful seclusions, which, intersecting the deep sides of the river, with umbrageous shades, and green hillocks, seemed to shut it from the world. Helen in vain looked for the distant towers of Dumbarton castle, marking the horizon: no horizon appeared, but a range of rocks and wooded precipices.

A sweet breeze played through the valley, and revived her harassed frame. She put aside her veil to enjoy its freshness, and saw that the knights turned their horses’ heads into one of the obscurest mountain defiles. She started at its depth, and at the gloom which involved its extremity. “It is our nearest path,” said the Scot: Helen made no reply, but turning her steed also, followed him; there being room for only one at a time to ride along the narrow margin of the river that flowed at its base. The

Englishman, whose voice she had not yet heard, and the attendants, came in the rear. It was with difficulty the horses could make their way through the thicket which interlaced the pathway; so confined, indeed, that it rather seemed a cleft made by an earthquake in the mountain than a road for the use of man.

When they had been employed for an hour in breaking their way through this trackless glen, they came to a wider space, where other and broader ravines opened before them. The Scot, taking a defile to the right, raised his bugle, and blew so sudden and loud a blast, that the horse on which Lady Helen sat, took fright, and began to plunge and rear, to the evident hazard of throwing her into the stream. Some of the dismounted men, seeing her danger, seized the horse by the bridle; while the English knight, extricating her from the saddle, carried her in his arms, through some clustering bushes, into a cave, and laid her at the feet of an armed man.

Terrified at this extraordinary action, she started up with a piercing shriek, but was at that moment enveloped in the arms of the stranger; and a loud and brutal shout of exultation resounded from the Scot who stood at the entrance. It was echoed from without. There was horror in every sound. "Blessed Virgin, protect me!" cried she, frantically striving to break from the man who held her. "Where am I?" cried she, looking wildly at the two men who had brought her: "Why am I not taken to my father?"

She received no answer; and both the Scot and the Englishman left the place. The stranger still held her locked in a grasp that seemed of iron. In vain she struggled, in vain she shrieked, in vain she called on earth and heaven for assistance; she was held, and still he kept silence. Exhausted with terror, and fruitless attempts for release, she put her hands together, and in a calmer tone exclaimed, "If you have honour, or humanity in your heart, release me! I am an unprotected woman, praying for your mercy; withhold it not for the sake of heaven, and your own soul!"

"Kneel to me then, thou syren!" cried the warrior,

with fierceness. As he spoke, he threw the tender knees of Lady Helen upon the rocky floor. His voice echoed terribly in her ears ; but obeying him, “ Free me,” cried she, “ for the sake of my dying father !”

“ Never, till I have had my revenge !”

At this dreadful denunciation she shuddered to the soul, but yet she spoke : “ Surely I am mistaken for some one else ! — Oh, how can I have offended any man, to incur so cruel an outrage !”

The warrior burst into a satanic laugh, and throwing up his visor — “ Behold me, Helen !” cried he, grasping her clasped hands with a horrible force : “ My hour is come !”

At the sight of the dreadful face of Soulis, she comprehended all her danger, and with supernatural strength wresting her hands from his hold, she burst through the bushes out of the cave. Her betrayers stood at the entrance, and catching her in their arms, brought her back to their lord. But it was an insensible form they now laid before him : overcome with horror, her senses fled. Short was this suspension from misery ; water was thrown on her face, and she awoke to recollection, lying on the bosom of her enemy. Again she struggled, again her cries echoed from side to side of the cavern. “ Peace !” cried the monster : “ you cannot escape — you are now mine for ever ! Twice you refused to be my wife ! — you dared to despise my love, and my power : — now you shall feel my hatred, and my revenge !”

“ Kill me !” cried the distracted Helen ; “ kill me, and I will bless you !”

“ That would be a poor vengeance,” cried he : “ you must be humbled, proud minion, — you must learn to fawn on me for a smile ; to woo, as my slave, for one of those caresses you spurned to receive as my wife.” As he spoke, he strained her to his breast, with the contending expressions of passion and revenge glaring in his eyes. Helen shrieked at the pollution of his lips ; and as he more fiercely held her, her hand struck against the hilt of his dagger. In a moment she drew it ; and armed with the strength of outraged innocence, unwitting whether it gave death or not, only hoping it would release her, she struck it into his side.

All was the action of an instant. While, as instantaneously, he caught her wrist, and exclaiming, "Damnable traitress!" dashed her from him, stunned, and motionless, to the ground.

The weapon had not penetrated far. But the sight of his blood, drawn by the hand of a woman, incensed the raging Soulis. He called aloud on Macgregor. The two men, who yet stood without the cave, re-entered. They started when they saw a dagger in his hand, and Helen lying apparently lifeless, with blood sprinkled on her garments.

Macgregor, who had personated the Scottish knight, in a tremulous voice asked why he had killed the lady?

Soulis frowned: "Here!" cried he, throwing open his vest; "this wound, that beautiful fiend you so piteously look upon, aimed at my life!"

"My Lord," said the other man, who had heard her shrieks, "I expected different treatment for the Earl of Mar's daughter."

"Base Scot!" returned Soulis, "when you brought a woman into these wilds to me, you had no right to expect I should use her otherwise than as I pleased, and you, as the servile minister of my pleasures."

"This language, Lord Soulis!" rejoined the man much agitated; "but you mistook me.—I meant not to reproach."

"'Tis well you did not;" and turning from him with contempt he listened to Macgregor; who, stooping towards the inanimate Helen, observed that her pulse beat.—"Fool!" returned Soulis, "did you think I would so rashly throw away what I have been at such pains to gain? Call your wife: she knows how to teach these minions submission to my will."

The man obeyed; and while his companion, by the command of Soulis, bound a fillet round the forehead of Helen, cut by the flints; the chief brought two chains, and fastening them to her wrists and ankles, exclaimed with brutal triumph, while he locked them on:—"There, my haughty damsel! flatter not thyself that the arms of Soulis shall be thine only fetters."

Macgregor's wife entered, and promised to obey all her

lord's injunctions. When she was left alone with the breathless body of Helen, water, and a few cordial drops, which she poured into the unhappy lady's mouth, soon recalled her wretched senses. On opening her eyes, the sight of one of her own sex, inspired her with some hope; but attempting to stretch out her hands in supplication, she was horror-struck at finding them fastened, and at the clink of the chains which bound her. "Why am I thus?" demanded she of the woman; but suddenly recollecting having attempted to pierce Soulis with his own dagger, and now supposing she had slain him, she added, "Is Lord Soulis killed?"

"No," replied the woman; "my husband says he is but slightly hurt; and surely your fair face belies your heart, if you could intend the death of so brave and loving a lord!"

"You then belong to him?" cried the wretched Helen, wringing her hands: "Alas, how am I beset!—what will be my unhappy fate!—Oh, Virgin of heaven, take me to thyself!"

"Heaven forbid!" cried the woman, "that you should pray against being the favourite lady of our noble chief! Many are the scores around Hermitage castle, who would come hither on their hands and knees to arrive at that happiness."

"Happiness!" cried Lady Helen, in anguish of spirit: "Oh, it can visit me no more, till I am restored to my father—till I am released from the power of Soulis! Give me liberty," continued she, wildly grasping the arm of the woman: "Assist me to escape, and half the wealth of the Earl of Mar shall be your reward!"

"Alas!" returned the woman; "my Lord would burn me on the spot, and murder my husband, did he think I even listened to such a project. No, lady; you never will see your father more, for none who once enter my Lord's Hermitage, ever wish to come out again."

"The Hermitage!" cried Helen, starting on her knees: "Oh, Father of the desolate, have mercy upon me! never let me live to enter those accursed walls!"

"They are frightful enough, to be sure," returned the

woman ; “ but you, gentle lady, will be princess there ; and in all things commanding the kingly heart of its lord, have rather cause to bless than to curse the castle of Soulis.”

“ Himself, and all that bears his name, are accursed to me,” returned Helen : “ his love is my abomination, his hatred my dread. Pity me, kind creature ; and if you have a daughter whose honour is dear to your prayers, think you see her in me, and have compassion on me. My life is in your hands ; for I swear before the throne of Almighty Purity, that Soulis shall see me die, rather than dishonoured !”

“ Poor young soul,” cried the woman, looking at her frantic gestures with commiseration ; “ I would pity you if I durst ; but I repeat, my life, and my husband’s, and my children, who are now near Hermitage, would all be sacrificed to the rage of Lord Soulis. You must be content to submit to his will.” Helen closed her hands over her breast in mute despair, and the woman went on : — “ And as for the matter of your making such lamentations about your father, if he be as little your friend as your mother is, you have not much cause to grieve on that score.”

Helen sat aghast. “ My mother ! what of her ? — Speak : tell me ? — It was indeed her signet, that betrayed me into these horrors. She cannot have consented — Oh no ! some villains. — Speak : tell me, what you would say of Lady Mar ?”

Regardless of the terrible emotion which now shook the frame of her auditor, the woman coolly replied, she had heard from her husband, who was the confidential servant of Lord Soulis, that it was to Lady Mar he owed the knowledge of Helen being at Bothwell. The Countess had written a letter to her cousin, Lord Buchan ; who being a sworn friend of England, was then with Lord de Valence at Dumbarton. In this epistle, she intimated “ her wish, that Lord Buchan would devise a plan to surprise Bothwell castle the ensuing day, to prevent the departure of its armed vassals, then preparing to march to the support of the outlaw Sir William Wallace, who, with his band of robbers, was lurking about the caverns of the Cartlane craigs.”

When this letter arrived, Lord Soulis was at dinner with the other lords ; and Buchan laying it before De Valence,

they all consulted what was best to be done. Lady Mar begged her cousin not to appear in the affair himself, that she might escape the suspicions of her lord; who, she strongly declared, was not arming his vassals for any disloyal disposition towards the King of England, but solely at the instigations of Wallace; to whom he romantically considered himself bound by the ties of gratitude. As she gave this information, she hoped that no attainder would fall upon her husband. And to keep the transaction as close as possible, she proposed that the Lord Soulis, who she understood was then at Dumbarton, should take the command of two or three thousand troops, and, marching to Bothwell next morning, seize the few hundred armed Scots who were there, ready to proceed to the mountains. She ended by saying, that her daughter-in-law was in the castle; which she hoped would be an inducement to Soulis to ensure the Earl of Mar's safety for the sake of her hand as his reward.

The greatest part of Lady Mar's injunctions could not be attended to, as Lord de Valence, as well as Soulis, was made privy to the secret. The English nobleman declared, that he should not do his duty to his King, if he did not head the force that went to quell so dangerous a conspiracy; and Soulis, eager to go at any rate, joyfully accepted the honour of being his companion. Lord Buchan was easily persuaded to the seizure of the Earl's person; as De Valence flattered him, that the King would endow him with the Mar estates, which must now be confiscated. Helen groaned at the latter part of this narration; but the woman, without noticing it, proceeded to relate, how, when the party had executed their design at Bothwell castle, she was to have been taken by Soulis to his castle near Glasgow. But on that wily Scot not finding her, he conceived the suspicion that Lord de Valence had prevailed on the Countess to give her up to him. He observed, that the woman who could be prevailed on to betray her daughter to one man, would easily be bribed to repeat the crime to another; and under this impression he accused the English nobleman of treachery. De Valence denied it vehemently; a quarrel ensued; and Soulis departed with a few of his

followers, giving out that he was retiring in high indignation to Dun-glass. But the fact was, he lurked about in Bothwell wood ; and from its recesses, saw Cressingham's lieutenant march by, to take possession of the castle in the King's name. A deserter from his troops, fell in with Lord Soulis's company ; and flying to him for protection, a long private conversation took place between them. At this period, one of the spies who had been sent by the chief in quest of news, returned with a female tenant of St. Fillan's, whom he had seduced from her home. She told Lord Soulis all he wanted to know ; informing him, that a beautiful young lady, who could be no other than Lady Helen Mar, was concealed in that convent.

On this information, he conversed a long time with the stranger from Cressingham's detachment. And determining on carrying off Helen immediately to Hermitage ; that the distance of Teviotdale might render a rescue less probable, he laid his plan accordingly. " In consequence," continued the woman, " my husband, and the stranger ; the one habited as a Scottish, and the other as an English knight, (for my lord being ever on some wild prank, has always a chest of strange dresses with him,) set out for St. Fillan's ; taking with them the signet which your mother had sent with her letter to the Earl her cousin. They hoped such a pledge of their truth, would ensure them credit. You know the tale they invented ; and its success proves my lord to be no bad contriver."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PENTLAND HILLS.

HELEN listened with astonishment and grief, to this too probable story of her step-mother's ill-judged tenderness, or cruel treachery ; and remembering the threats which had escaped that lady in their last conversation, she saw no reason to doubt, what so clearly explained the before inex-

plicable seizure of her father, the betraying of Wallace, and her own present calamity.

“ You do not answer me,” rejoined the woman ; “ but if you think I don’t say true, Lord Soulis himself will assure you of the fact.”

“ Alas, no !” returned Helen, profoundly sighing ; “ I believe it too well. I see the depth of the misery into which I am plunged. And yet,” cried she, recollecting the imposition the men had put upon her ; “ yet, I shall not be wholly so, if my father lives, and was not in the extremity they told me of !”

“ If that thought gives you comfort, retain it ;” returned the woman : “ the whole story of the Earl’s illness, was an invention, to bring you at so short notice from the protection of the prior.”

“ I thank thee, gracious Providence, for this comfort !” exclaimed Helen : “ it inspires me with redoubled trust in thee.”

Margery shook her head. “ Ah, poor victim (thought she), how vain is thy devotion !” But she had not time to say so, for her husband, and the deserter from Cressingham, re-entered the cave. Helen, afraid that it was Soulis, started up. The stranger made a motion to lift her in his arms : she struggled, and in the violence of her action, struck his beaver : it opened, and discovered a pale and stern countenance, with a large scar across his jaw ; this mark of contest, and the gloomy scowl of his eyes, made Helen rush towards the woman for protection. The man hastily closed his helmet, and speaking through the closed steel, for the first time she heard his voice, which sounded hollow and decisive :—he bade her prepare to accompany Lord Soulis in a journey to the south.

Helen looked at her shackled arms, and despairing of effecting her escape by any effort of her own, she thought that gaining time might be some advantage ; and allowing the man to take her hand, while Macgregor supported her on the other side, they led her out of the cave. She observed the latter smile and wink at his wife.—“ Oh !” cried she, “ to what am I betrayed !—Unhand me—

leave me !” Almost fainting with dread, she leaned against the arm of the stranger.

Thunder now pealed over her head, and lightning shot across the mountains. She looked up : “ Merciful heaven !” cried she, in a voice of deep horror ; “ send down thy bolt on me !” — At that moment Soulis, mounted on his steed, approached, and ordered her to be put into the litter. Incapable of contending with the numbers which surrounded her, she allowed them to execute their master’s commands. Macgregor’s wife was set on a pillion behind him ; and Soulis giving the word, they all marched on at a rapid pace. In a few hours, having cleared the shady valleys of the Clyde, they entered the long and barren tracts of the Leadhill moors.

A dismal hue overspread the country ; the thunder yet roared in distant peals, and the lightning came down in such vast sheets, that the carriers were often obliged to set down their burden, and cover their eyes to regain their sight. A shrill wind pierced the slight covering of the litter, and blowing it aside, discovered at intervals the rough outlines of the distant hills, visible through the mist ; or the gleaming of some wandering water, as it glided away over the cheerless waste.

“ All is desolation, like myself !” thought Helen ; but neither the cold wind, nor the rain, now drifting into her vehicle, occasioned her any sensation. It is only when the mind is at ease that the body is delicate : all within her was too expectant of mental horrors, to notice the casual inconveniences of season or situation.

The cavalcade with difficulty mounted the steps of a stupendous mountain, where the storm raged so turbulently, that the men who carried the litter stopped, and told their lord, it would be impossible to proceed in the approaching darkness ; they conjured him to look at the perpendicular rocks, rendered indeterminate by the gathering mist ; — to feel the overwhelming gusts of the tempest ; and then judge whether they dare venture with the litter on so dangerous a pathway, made slippery by descending rain !

To halt in such a spot, seemed to Soulis as perilous as to proceed. — “ We shall not be better off,” answered he,

“should we attempt to return: precipices lie on either side; and to stand still would be equally perilous: the torrents from the heights increase so rapidly there is every chance of our being swept away, should we remain exposed to their stream.”

Helen looked at these sublime cascades with a calm welcome, as they poured from the hills, and flung their spray upon the roof of her vehicle. She hailed her release in the death they menaced; and far from being intimidated at the prospect, cast a resigned, and even wistful glance, into the swelling lake beneath, under whose waves she expected soon to sleep.

On the remonstrance of their master, the men resumed their pace; and after hard contention with the storm, they gained the summit of the west side of the mountain; and were descending its eastern brow, when the shades of night closed in upon them. Looking down into the black chaos, on the brink of which they must pass along, they once more protested they could not advance a foot, until the dawn should give them some security.

At this declaration, which Soulis saw could not now be disputed, he ordered the troop to halt under the shelter of a projecting rock. Its huge arch overhung the ledge that formed the road, while a deep gulf at his feet, by the roaring of waters, proclaimed itself the receptacle of those cataracts which rush tremendous from the ever-streaming Pentland hills.

Soulis dismounted. The men set down the litter, and removed to a distance as he approached. He opened one of the curtains, and throwing himself beside the exhausted, but watchful Helen, clasped his arms roughly about her, and exclaimed — “Sweet minion, I must pillow on your bosom till the morn awakes!” His brutal lips were again riveted to her cheek. Ten thousand strengths seemed then to heave him from her heart; and struggling with a power that amazed even herself, she threw him from her; and holding him off with her shackled arms, her shrieks again pierced the heavens.

“Scream thy soul away, poor fool!” exclaimed Soulis,

seizing her fiercely in his arms ; “ for thou art now so surely mine, that heaven itself cannot preserve thee.”

At that moment her couch was shaken by a sudden shock, and in the next she was covered with the blood of Soulis. A stroke from an unseen arm had wounded him, and starting on his feet, a fearful battle of swords took place over the prostrate Helen.

Two men, out of the numbers who hastened to the assistance of their master, fell dead on her body ; while the chief himself, covered with wounds, and breathing revenge and blasphemy, was forced off by the survivors. “ Where do you carry me, villains ? ” cried he : “ Separate me not from the vengeance I will yet hurl on that demon who has robbed me of my victim, or ye shall die a death more horrible than hell can inflict ! ” He raved ; but more unheeded than the tempest : terrified that the spirits of darkness were indeed their pursuers, in spite of his reiterated threats, the men carried him to a distant hollow in the rock ; and laid him down, now insensible from loss of blood. One or two of the most desperate returned to see what was become of Lady Helen ; well aware that if they could regain her, their master would be satisfied : but on the reverse, should she be lost, the whole troop knew their fate would be some merciless punishment.

Macgregor, and the deserter of Cressingham, were the first who reached the spot where the lady had been left : with horror they found the litter, but not herself. She was gone. But whether carried off by the mysterious arm which had felled their lord, or she had thrown herself into the foaming gulf beneath, they could not determine. They decided, however, the latter should be their report to Soulis ; knowing he would rather believe the object of his passions had perished, than that she had escaped his toils.

Almost stupified with consternation, they returned to repeat this tale to their furious lord, who, on having his wounds stanch'd, had recovered from his swoon. On hearing that the beautiful creature, he had so lately believed his own beyond the power of fate ; that *his property*, as he called her, the devoted slave of his will, the mistress of his destiny, was lost to him for ever, swallowed up in the

whelming wave, he became frantic. There was desperation in every word. He raved; tore up the earth like a wild beast; and, foaming at the mouth, dashed the wife of Macgregor from him, as she approached with a fresh balsam for his wounds. "Off, scum of a damned sex!" cried he: "Where is she, whom I intrusted to thy care?"

"My Lord," answered the affrighted woman, you know best. You terrified the poor young creature. You forced yourself into her litter, and can you wonder —"

"That I should force you to perdition! — execrable witch," cried he, "that knew no better how to prepare a slave to receive her lord!" As he spoke, he struck her again; but it was with his gauntlet hand, and the eyes of the unfortunate woman opened no more. The blow fell on her temple; and a motionless corpse lay before him.

"My wife!" cried the poor Macgregor, putting his trembling arms about her neck: "Oh, my Lord, how have I deserved this? You have slain her!"

"Suppose I have!" returned the chief with a cold scorn; "she was old and ugly: and could you recover Helen, you should cull Hermitage, for a substitute for this prating beldam."

Macgregor made no reply, but feeling in his heart, that he "who sows the wind, must reap the whirlwind;" that such were the rewards of villany, to its vile instruments; he could not but say to himself, "I have deserved it of my God, but not of thee!" — and sobbing over the remains of his equally criminal wife, by the assistance of his comrades he removed her from the now hated presence of his lord.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HUT.

MEANWHILE, the Lady Helen, hardly rational from the horror and hope that agitated her, extricated herself from the dead bodies; and in her eagerness to escape, would certainly have fallen over the precipice, had not the same gallant arm which had covered her persecutor with wounds,

caught her, as she sprang from the litter. "Fear not, madam," exclaimed a gentle voice, "you are under the protection of a Scottish knight."

There was a kindness in the sound, that seemed to proclaim the speaker to be of her own kindred; she felt as if suddenly rescued by a brother; and dropping her head on his bosom, a shower of grateful tears relieved her heart, and prevented her fainting. Aware that no time was to be lost; that the enemy might soon be on him again, he clasped her in his arms; and with the activity of a mountain deer, crossed two rushing streams; leaping from rock to rock, even under the foam of their flood; and then treading, with a light and steady step, an alpine bridge of one single tree, which arched the cataract below, he reached the opposite side, where, spreading his plaid upon the rock, he laid the trembling Helen upon it. Then lightly touching his bugle — in a moment he was surrounded by a number of men, whose rough gratulations might have reawakened the alarm of Helen, had she not still heard his voice. There was graciousness, and balm-distilling sweetness in every tone; and she listened in calm expectation.

He directed the men to take their axes, and cut away, on their side of the fall, the tree which arched it. It was probable the villain he had just assailed, or his followers, might pursue him; and he thought it prudent to demolish the bridge.

The men obeyed; and the warrior returned to his fair charge. It was raining fast; and fearful of farther exposing her to the inclemencies of the night, he proposed leading her to shelter. "There is a hermit's cell on the northern side of this mountain. I will conduct you thither in the morning, as to the securest asylum; but meanwhile we must seek a nearer shelter."

"Any where, sir, with honour my guide," answered Helen timidly.

"You are safe with me, lady," returned he, "as in the arms of the Virgin. I am a man who can now have no joy in womankind, but when as a brother I protect them. Whoever you are, confide in me, and you shall not be betrayed."

Helen confidently gave him her hand, and strove to rise ; but at the first attempt, the shackles pierced her ankles, and she sunk again to the ground. — The cold iron on her wrists touched the hand of her preserver. He now recollected his surprise on hearing the clank of chains, when carrying her over the bridge : — “ Who,” enquired he, “ could have done this unmanly deed ? ”

“ The wretch from whom you rescued me ; to prevent my escape from a captivity worse than death.”

While she spoke, he wrenched open the manacles from her wrists and ankles, and threw them over the precipice. As she heard them dash into the torrent, an unutterable gratitude filled her heart ; and again giving her hand to him, to lead her forward, she said with earnestness, “ O, sir, if you have a wife or sister — should they ever fall into the like peril with mine ; for in these terrific times, who is secure ? may Heaven reward your bravery, by sending them such a preserver ! ”

The stranger sighed deeply : — “ Sweet lady,” returned he, “ I have no wife, no sister. But my kindred is nevertheless very numerous, and I thank thee for thy prayer.” The hero sighed profoundly again ; and led her silently down the windings of the declivity. Having proceeded with caution, they descended into a little wooded dell, and soon approached the half-standing remains of what had once been a shepherd’s hut.

“ This,” said the knight, as they entered, “ was the habitation of a good old man, who fed his flock on these mountains ; but a band of Southron soldiers forced his only daughter from him ; and, plundering his little abode, drove him out upon the waste. He perished the same night by grief, and the inclemencies of the weather. His son, a brave youth, was left for dead by his sister’s ravishers ; but I found him in this dreary solitude ; and he told me the too general story, of his wounds and his despair. Indeed, lady, when I heard your shrieks from the opposite side of the chasm, I thought they might proceed from this poor boy’s sister, and I flew to restore them to each other.”

Helen shuddered, as he related a tale so nearly resembling her own ; and trembling with weakness, and

horror of what might have been her fate, had she not been rescued by this gallant stranger, she sunk exhausted upon the turf. The chief still held her hand ; and alarmed for her state, called to his men to seek fuel to make a fire. While his messengers were exploring the crannies of the rocks, for dried leaves and sticks, Helen, totally overcome, leaned almost motionless against the wall of the hut. Finding by her shortening breath, that she was fainting, the knight took her in his arms, and supporting her on his breast, chafed her cold hands and forehead. His efforts were vain : she seemed to have ceased to breathe ; hardly a pulse moved her heart. — Alarmed at such signs of death, he called to one of the men, who remained in the outer chamber.

The man answered his master's enquiry, by putting a flask into his hand. The knight poured some of its contents into her mouth. Her streaming locks touched his cheek. " Poor lady !" said he, " she will perish in these forlorn regions, where neither warmth nor nourishment can be found."

To his glad welcome, several of his men soon after entered with a quantity of withered boughs, which they had found in the fissures of the rock at some distance. With these a fire was speedily kindled ; and its blaze diffusing comfort through the chamber, he had the satisfaction of hearing a sigh from the breast of his charge. Her head still leaned on his bosom, when she opened her eyes. The light shone full on her face.

" Lady," said he, " are you revived?" Her delicacy started at the situation in which she found herself, and raising herself, though feebly, she thanked him, and requested a little water. It was given to her. She drank some ; and looking up, would have met the fixed and compassionate gaze of the knight, had not weakness cast such a film before her eyes that she scarcely saw any thing. Being still languid, she leaned her head on the turf seat.—Her face was pale as marble, and her long hair, saturated with wet, by its darkness made her look of a more deadly hue.

" Death ! how lovely canst thou be !" sighed the knight to himself—he even groaned. Helen started, and looked

around her with alarm.—“Fear not,” said he, “I only dreaded your pale looks: but you revive, and will yet bless all that are dear to you; suffer me, sweet lady, to drain the wet from these tresses?”—He took hold of them as he spoke. She saw the water running from her hair over his hands, and allowing him to wring out the rain, he continued wiping her glossy locks with his scarf, till, exhausted by fatigue, she gradually sunk into a profound sleep.

Dawn had penetrated the ruined walls of the hut, before Lady Helen awoke. But when she did, she was refreshed; and opening her eyes—hardly conscious where she was, or whether all that floated in her memory were not the departing vapours of a frightful dream—she started, and fixed them upon the figure of the knight, who was seated near her. His noble air, and the pensive expression of his fine features, struck like a spell upon her gathering recollections; she at once remembered all she had suffered, all that she owed to him. She moved.—Her preserver turned his eyes towards her: seeing she was awake, he rose from the side of the dying embers, he had sedulously kept alive during her slumber, and expressed his hopes that she felt revived. She returned him a grateful reply, in the affirmative; and he quitted her, to rouse his men for their journey to the hermit’s cell.

When he re-entered, he found Helen braiding up the fine hair which had so lately been scattered by the rudeness of man, and the elements. She would have risen at his approach, but he seated himself on a stone at her feet. “We shall be detained here a few minutes longer,” said he: “I have ordered my men to make a litter of crossed branches, to bear you on their shoulders. Your delicate limbs would not be equal to the toil of descending these heights, to the glen of stones. The venerable man who inhabits there, will protect you, until he can summon your family, or friends, to receive his charge.”

At these words, which Helen thought were meant to reprove her for not having revealed herself, she blushed—but fearful of breathing a name under the interdict of the English governors, and which had already spread de-

vastation over all with whom it had been connected ; fearful of involving her preserver's safety, by making him aware of the persecuted creature he had rescued ; she paused for a moment ; and then with the colour heightening on her cheeks, replied : — “ For your humanity, brave sir, shown this night to a friendless woman, I must be ever grateful ; but not even to the hermit, can I reveal my name. It is fraught with danger to every honest Scot who should know that he protects one who bears it ; and therefore, least of all, noble stranger, would I breathe it to you.” She averted her face, to conceal the emotions she could not subdue.

The knight looked at her intensely, and profoundly sighed. Half her unbraided locks lay upon her bosom, which now heaved with suppressed feelings ; and the fast-falling tears, gliding through her long eye-lashes, dropped upon his hand — he started, and tore his eyes from her countenance. “ I ask not, madam, to know what you think proper to conceal. But danger has no alarms for me, when, by incurring it, I serve those who need a protector.”

A sudden thought flashed across her mind : might it not be possible that this tender guardian of her safety, this heroic profferer of service, was the noble Wallace ? But the vain idea fled. He was pent up amidst the beleaguered defiles of Cartlane craigs, sworn to extricate the helpless families of his followers, or to perish with them. — This knight was accompanied by none but men : and his kind eyes shone in too serene a lustre, to be the mirrors of the disturbed soul of the suffering chief of Ellerslie. “ Ah, then,” murmured she to herself, “ are there two men in Scotland, who will speak thus ? ” She looked up in his face. The plumes of his bonnet shaded his features : but she saw they were paler than on his entrance, and a strange expression of distraction agitated their before composed lines. His eyes were bent to the ground as he proceeded : —

“ I am the servant of my fellow-creatures — command me, and my few faithful followers ; and if it be in the power of such small means to succour you, or yours, I am ready to answer for their obedience. If the villain from whom I had the happiness to release you, be yet more

deeply implicated in your sorrows, tell me how they can be relieved, and I will attempt it. I shall make no new enemies by the deed, for the Southrons and I are at eternal enmity."

Helen could not withdraw her eyes from his varying countenance, which, from underneath his dark plumes, seemed like a portentous cloud, at intervals to emit the rays of the cheering sun, or the lightning of threatening thunder. "Alas!" replied she, "ill should I repay such nobleness, were I to involve it in the calamities of my house. — No, generous stranger, I must remain unknown. Leave me with the hermit; and from his cell I will send to some relation, to take me thence."

"I urge you no more, gentle lady," replied the knight, rising; "were I at the head of an army, instead of a handful of men, I might then have a better argument for offering my services; but as it is, I feel my weakness, and seek to know no further."

Helen trembled with unaccountable emotion:— "Were you at the head of an army, I might then dare to reveal the full weight of my anxieties; but heaven has already been sufficiently gracious to me by your hands, in redeeming me from my cruellest enemy: and for the rest, I put my trust in the same over-ruling Providence." At this moment a man entered, and told the knight, the vehicle was finished, the morning fine, and his men ready to march. He turned towards Helen: "May I conduct you to the rude carriage we have prepared?"

Helen gathered her mantle about her: and the knight throwing his scarf over her head, — it had no other covering — she gave him her hand, and he led her out of the hut to the side of the bier. It was overlaid with the men's plaids. The knight placed her on it; and the carriers raising it on their shoulders, her deliverer led the way, and they took their course down the mountain.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GLEN OF STONES.

THEY proceeded in silence through the curvings of the dell, till it opened into a hazardous path along the top of a far extending cliff, which overhung and clasped in the western side of a deep loch. As they mounted the pending wall of this immense amphitheatre, Helen watched the sublime uprise of the king of light, issuing from behind the opposite citadel of rocks, and borne aloft on a throne of clouds that swam in floating gold. The herbage on the cliffs glittered with liquid emeralds, as his beams kissed their summits; and the lake beneath sparkled like a sea of molten diamonds. All nature seemed to rejoice at the presence of this magnificent emblem of the Most High. Helen's heart swelled with devotion, and its sacred voice breathed from her lips.

“Such,” thought she, “O Sun, art thou! — The resplendent image of the Giver of all Good. Thy cheering beams, like his All-cheering Spirit, pervade the soul, and drive thence the despondency of cold and darkness. But, bright as thou art, how does the similitude fade before god-like man, the true image of his Maker! How far do his protecting arms extend over the desolate! How mighty is the power of his benevolence, to dispense succour, to administer consolation!”

As she thus mused, her eyes fell on the noble mien of the knight, who, with his spear in his hand, and wrapped in his dark mantle of mingled greens, led the way, with a graceful, but rapid step, along the shelving declivity. Turning suddenly to the left, he struck into a defile between two prodigious craggy mountains; whose brown cheeks trickling with ten thousand rills, seemed to weep over the deep gloom of the valley beneath. Scattered fragments of rock, from the cliffs above, covered with their huge and almost impassable masses the surface of the ground. Not an herb was to be seen; all was black, barren, and terrific. On entering this horrid pass, Helen would have shuddered, had she not placed implicit confidence in her conductor.

As they advanced, the vale gradually narrowed, and at last shut them within an immense chasm, which seemed to have been cleft at its towering summit, to admit a few beams of light to the desert below. A dark river flowed along, amid which the bases of the mountains showed their union, by the mingling of many a rugged cliff, projecting upwards, in a variety of strange and hideous forms. The men who carried Helen, with some difficulty found a safe footing. However, after frequent rests, and unremitting caution, they at last extricated themselves from the most intricate path; and more lightly followed their chief, into a less gloomy part of this chaos of nature. The knight stopped, and approaching the bier, told Helen they had arrived at the end of their journey.

“In the heart of that cliff,” said he, “is the hermit’s cell; a desolate shelter, but a safe one. Old age and poverty hold no temptations to the enemies of Scotland.”

As he spoke, the venerable man, who had heard voices beneath, appeared on the rock; and while his tall and majestic figure, clad in grey, moved forward, and his silver beard flowed from his saintly countenance upon the air, he seemed the bard of Morven, issuing from his cave of shells, to bid a hero’s welcome to the young and warlike Oscar.

“Bless thee, my son,” cried he, as he descended, “what good or evil accident hath returned thee so soon to these solitudes?”

The knight briefly related the circumstances of Helen’s rescue, and that he had brought her to share his asylum.

The hermit took her by the hand, and graciously promised her every service in his power. He then preceded the knight, whose firmer arm supported her up the rock, to the outer apartment of the cell.

A sacred awe struck her, as she entered this place, dedicated wholly to God. She bowed, and crossed herself. The hermit, observing her devotion, blessed her, and bade her welcome to the abode of peace.

“Here, daughter,” said he, “has one son of persecuted Scotland found a refuge. There is nought alluring in these wilds, to attract the spoiler. The green herb is all the food they afford, and the limpid water their best beverage.”

“ Ah ! ” returned Helen, with grateful animation, “ would to Heaven, that all who love the freedom of Scotland, were now within this glen ! The herb, and the stream, would be luxuries, when tasted in liberty and hope. My father, his friend — ” she stopped, recollecting that she had almost betrayed the secrecy she meant to maintain, and looking down, remained in confused silence. The knight gazed at her ; and much wished to penetrate, what she concealed : but delicacy forbade him to urge her again. He spoke not ; but the hermit, ignorant of her reluctance to reveal her family, resumed : —

“ I do not wonder, gentle lady, that you speak in terms, which tell me, even your tender sex feels the tyranny of Edward. Who, in Scotland, is exempt ? The whole country groans beneath his oppressions : and the cruelty of his agents make its rivulets run with blood. Six months ago I was abbot of Scone. Because I refused to betray my trust, and resign the archives of the kingdom, lodged there, Edward, the rebel-anointed of the Lord ! the profaner of the sanctuary ! sent his emissaries to sack the convent ; to tear the holy pillar of Jacob from its shrine ; and to wrest from my grasp the records I refused to deliver. All was done as the usurper commanded. Most of my brethren were slain. Myself, and the remainder, were turned out upon the waste. We retired to the monastery of Cambus-kenneth : — but there, oppression found us. Cressingham, having seized on other religious houses, determined to swell his hoards with the plunder of this also. In the dead of night the attack was made. My brethren fled ; I knew not whither to go. But determined to fly far from the tracts of our ravagers, I took my course over the hills ; and finding the valley of stones fit for my purpose, for two months have lived alone in this wilderness.”

“ Unhappy Scotland ! ” ejaculated Helen. Her eyes had followed the chief, who, during this narrative, leaned thoughtfully against the entrance of the cave. His eyes were cast upwards, with an expression that made her heart vibrate the exclamation which had escaped her. The knight turned, and approached her : “ You hear from the lips of my venerable friend,” said he, “ a direful story :

happy then am I, gentle lady, that you and he have found a refuge, though a rough one. I must now tear myself from this tranquillity, to seek scenes more befitting a younger son of the country he deploras."

Helen felt unable to answer. But the abbot spoke: "And am I not to see you again?"

"That is as heaven wills," replied he; "but as it is unlikely on this side the grave, my best pledge of friendship is this lady. To you she may reveal what she has withheld from me; but in either case she is secure in your goodness."

"Rely on my faith, my son; and may the Almighty's shield hang on your steps!"

The knight turned to Helen: "Farewell, sweet lady!" said he. She trembled at the words, and hardly conscious of what she did, held out her hand to him. He took it, and drew it towards his lips, but checking himself, he only pressed it, while in a mournful voice he added, "In your prayer, sometimes remember the most desolate of men!"

A mist seemed to pass over the eyes of Lady Helen. She felt as if on the point of losing something most precious to her: "My prayers for my own preserver, and for my father's," cried she, in an agitated voice, "shall ever be mingled. And, if ever it be safe to remember me — should Heaven indeed *arm the patriot's hand* — then my father may be proud to know and to thank the brave deliverer of his child."

The knight paused, and looked with animation upon her: "Then your father is in arms, and against the tyrant! Tell me where, and you see before you a man who is ready to join him, and to lay down his life in the just cause!"

At this vehement declaration, Lady Helen's full heart overflowed, and she burst into tears. He drew towards her, and in a moderated voice continued: "My men, though few, are brave. They are devoted to their country, and are willing for her sake to follow me to victory or death. As I am a knight, I am sworn to defend the cause of right; and where shall I so justly find it, as on the side of bleeding, wasted Scotland? How shall I so well begin my career, as in the defence of her injured sons? Speak,

gentle lady! trust me with your noble father's name, and he shall not have cause to blame the confidence you repose in a true though wandering Scot!"

"My father," replied Helen, weeping afresh, "is not where your generous services can reach him. Two brave chiefs, one a kinsman of my own, and the other his friend, are now colleagued to free him. If they fail, my whole house falls in blood! and to add another victim to the destiny, which in that case will overwhelm me — the thought is beyond my strength —" Faint with agitation, and the horrible images, which re-awakened her direst fears, she stopped; and then added in a suppressed voice — "Farewell!"

"Not till you hear me further," replied he: "I repeat, I have now a scanty number of followers; but I leave these mountains to gather more. Tell me then, where I may join these chiefs you speak of: give me a pledge that I come from you; and, whoever may be your father, as he is a true Scot, I will compass his release, or perish in the attempt."

"Alas! generous stranger," cried she, "to what would you persuade me? You know not the peril that you ask!"

"Nothing is perilous to me," replied he, with a heroic smile, "that is to serve my country. I have no interest, no joy, but in her. Give me then the only happiness of which I am now capable, and send me to serve her, by freeing one of her defenders!"

Helen hesitated. The tumult of her mind dried her tears. She looked up, with all these inward agitations painted on her cheeks. His beaming eyes were full of patriotic ardour; and his fine countenance, composed into a heavenly calmness by the sublime sentiments which occupied his soul, made him appear to her not as a man, but as a god.

"Fear not, lady," said the hermit, "that you plunge your deliverer into any extraordinary danger by involving him in what you might call rebellion against the usurper. He is already a proscribed man."

"Proscribed!" repeated she; "wretched indeed is my country, when her noblest spirits are denied the right to

live ! When every step they take, to regain what has been torn from them, only involves them in deeper ruin !”

“No country is wretched, sweet lady,” returned the knight, “till, by a dastardly acquiescence, it consents to its own slavery. Bonds, and death, are the utmost of our enemy’s malice ; the one is beyond their power to inflict, when a man is determined to die or to live free ; and for the other, which of us will think that ruin which leads to the blessed freedom of paradise ?”

Helen looked on the chief as she used to look on her cousin, when expressions of virtuous enthusiasm burst from his lips ; but now it was rather with the gaze of admiring awe, than the exultation of one youthful mind sympathising with another : — “You would teach confidence to despair herself,” returned she ; “again I hope — for God does not create in vain ! You shall know my father ; but first, generous stranger, let me apprise you of every danger with which that knowledge is surrounded. He is hemmed in by enemies : — Alas, how closely are they connected with him ! — not the English only, but the most powerful of his own countrymen, are leagued against him. They sold my father to captivity, and, perhaps, death ; and I, wretched I, was the price. To free him, the noblest of Scottish knights is now engaged ; but such hosts impede him, that hope hardly dares hover over his tremendous path.”

“Then,” cried the stranger, “let my arm be second to his in the great achievement. My heart yearns to meet a brother in arms, who feels for Scotland what I do ; and with such a coadjutor, I dare promise your father liberty ; and, that the power of England shall be shaken.”

Helen’s heart beat violently, at these words. “I would not defer the union of two such minds — go then to the Cartlane craigs — But, alas ! how can I direct you ?” cried she : “the passes are beset with English ; and I know not whether at this moment the brave Wallace survives, to be again the deliverer of my father !”

Helen paused. The recollection of all that Wallace had suffered for the sake of her father, and of the mortal extremity in which Ker left him, rose like a dreadful train of apparitions before her. A pale horror overspread her

countenance ; and lost in these remembrances, she did not remark the start, and rushing colour of the knight, as she pronounced the name of Wallace.

“ If Wallace ever had the happiness of serving any who belonged to you,” returned the knight, “ he has at least one source of pleasure in that remembrance. Tell me what he can farther do ? Only say, where is that father whom you say he once preserved, and I will hasten to yield my feeble aid to repeat the service !”

“ Alas !” replied Helen, “ I cannot but repeat my fears that the bravest of men no longer exists. Two days before I was betrayed into the hands of the traitor from whom you rescued me, a messenger from Cartlane craigs informed my cousin that the gallant Wallace was surrounded ; and if my father did not send forces to relieve him, he must inevitably perish. No forces could my father send ; he was then made a prisoner by the English ; his retainers shared the same fate, and none but my cousin escaped, to accompany the honest Scot back to his master. My cousin set forth with a few followers to join him — a few against thousands.”

“ They are in arms for their country, lady,” returned the knight ; “ and a thousand invisible angels guard them : fear not for *them* ! But for your father ; name to me the place of his confinement, and as I have not the besiegers of Cartlane craigs to encounter, I engage, with God’s help, and the arms of my men (who never yet shrunk from sword or spear), to set the brave Earl free !”

“ How !” exclaimed Helen, remembering that she had not yet mentioned her father’s rank, and gazing at him with astonishment : “ Do you know his name — is the misfortune of my father already so far spread ?”

“ Rather say his virtue, lady,” answered the knight ; “ no man who watches over the destiny of our devoted country can be ignorant of her friends, or of the sufferers who bear for her sake. I know that the Earl of Mar has made himself a generous sacrifice, but I am yet to learn the circumstances from you. Speak without reserve, that I may seek the accomplishment of my vow, and restore to Scotland its best friend !”

“Thou brother in heart to the generous Wallace!” exclaimed Lady Helen, “my voice is feeble to thank thee.” The hermit, who had listened in silent interest, now fearing the consequence of so much emotion, presented her with a cup of water and a little fruit, to refresh herself, before she satisfied the enquiries of the knight. She put the cup to her lips, to gratify the benevolence of her host; but her anxious spirit was too much occupied in the concerns dearest to her heart, to feel the wants of the body; and turning to the knight, she briefly related what had been the design of her father with regard to Sir William Wallace; how he had been seized at Bothwell, and sent with his family a prisoner to Dumbarton castle.

“Proceed then thither,” continued she. “If Heaven have yet spared the lives of Wallace and my cousin Murray, you will meet them before its walls. Meanwhile, I shall seek the protection of my father’s sister, and in her castle near the Forth, abide in safety. But, noble stranger, one bond I must lay upon you: should you come up with my cousin, do not discover that you have met with me. He is precipitate in resentment; and his hatred is so hot against Soulis, my betrayer, that should he know the outrage I have sustained, he would, I fear, run himself and the general cause into great danger, by seeking an immediate revenge.”

The stranger readily passed his word to Helen, that he would never mention her name to any of her family, until she herself should give him leave. “But when your father is restored to his rights,” continued he, “in his presence I hope to claim my acquaintance with his lovely daughter.”

Helen blushed at this compliment:—it was not more than any man in his situation might have said, but it confused her; and hardly knowing what were her thoughts, she answered—“His personal freedom may be effected! and God grant such reward to your prowess!—But his other rights; what can recover them? His estates sequestered, his vassals in bonds; all power of the Earl of Mar will be annihilated; and from some obscure refuge like this, must he utter his thanks to his daughter’s preserver.”

“Not so, lady,” replied he: “the sword is now raised

in Scotland, that cannot be laid down, till it be broken, or have conquered. All have suffered by Edward ; the powerful, banished into other countries, that their wealth might reward foreign mercenaries ; the poor, driven into the waste, that the meanest Southron might share the spoil ! Where all have suffered, all must be ready to revenge ; and when a whole people take up arms to regain their rights, what force can prevent restitution ? ”

“ So I felt,” returned Helen, “ while I had not yet seen the horrors of the contest. While my father commanded in Bothwell castle, and was sending out auxiliaries to the patriot chief, I too felt nothing but the inspiration which led them on, and saw nothing but the victory which must crown so just a cause. But now, when all whom my father commanded are slain or carried away by the enemy ; when he is himself a prisoner, and awaiting the sentence of the tyrant he opposed ; when the gallant Wallace, instead of being able to hasten to his rescue, is besieged by a numberless host ; — hope almost dies within me, and I fear, that whoever may be fated to free Scotland, my beloved father, and those belonging to him, are first to be made a sacrifice.”

She turned pale as she spoke ; and the stranger resumed : “ No, lady ; if there be that virtue in Scotland, which can alone deserve freedom, it will be achieved. I am an inconsiderable man : but relying on the God of Justice, I promise you your father’s liberty ! and let his freedom be a pledge to you for that of your country. I now go to rouse a few brave spirits to arms. — Remember, the battle is not to the strong, nor victory with a multitude of hosts ! The banner* of St. Andrew was once held from the heavens over a little band of Scots, while they discomfited a thousand enemies — the same arm leads me on : and, if need be, I despair not to see it again, like the flaming

* At a time when Achaius king of Scots, and Hungus king of the Picts, were fiercely driven by Athelstan king of Northumberland into East Lothian ; full of terrors of what the next morning might bring forth, Hungus fell into a sleep, and beheld a vision, which, tradition tells, was verified the ensuing day by the appearance of the cross of St. Andrew held out to him from the heavens, and waving him to victory. Under this banner he conquered the Northumberland forces ; and slaying their leader, the scene of the battle has henceforth been called *Athelstanford*.

pillar before the Israelites, consuming the enemies of liberty, even in the fulness of their might."

While he yet spoke, the hermit re-entered from the inner cell, supporting a youth on his arm. At sight of the knight, who held out his hand to him, he dropped on his knees, and burst into tears. "Do you then leave me?" cried he! "am I not to serve my preserver?"

Helen rose in undescribable agitation: there was something in the feelings of the boy, that was infectious; and while her own heart beat violently, she looked first on his emaciated figure, and then at the noble contour of the knight, "where every god had set his seal." His beaming eyes seemed the very fountains of consolation; his cheek was bright with generous emotions; and turning from the suppliant boy to Helen, she advanced a few paces towards him.

"Rise," said he to the youth, "and behold in this lady the object of the service to which I appoint you. — You will soon, I hope, be sufficiently recovered to attend upon her wishes as you would upon mine. — Be her servant and her guard; and when we meet again, as she will then be under the protection of her father, if you do not prefer so gentle a service before the rougher one of war, I will resume you to myself."

The young man, who had obeyed the knight and arisen, bowed respectfully; and Helen, uttering some incoherent words of thanks, to hide her increasing agitation, turned away. The hermit exclaimed, "Again, my son, I beseech Heaven to bless thee!"

"And may its guardian care protect all here!" returned the knight. Helen looked up to bid him a last farewell — but he was gone. The hermit had left the cell with him, and the youth also had disappeared into the inner cave. Being left alone, she threw herself down before the altar; and giving way to a burst of tears, inwardly implored Heaven to protect the knight's life, and by his means to grant safety to Wallace, and freedom to her father!

As she prayed, her agitation subsided; and a holy confidence elevating her mind, she remained in an ecstasy of

hope, till a solemn voice from behind aroused her from this happy trance.

“Blessed are they which put their trust in God!”

She started up, and perceived the hermit; who, on entering, had observed her devout position, and a spontaneous benediction broke from his lips: — “Daughter,” said he, leading her to a seat; “this hero will prevail; for the power before whose altar you have just knelt, has declared, ‘My might is with them who obey my laws, and put their trust in me!’ You speak highly of the young and valiant Sir William Wallace, but I cannot conceive that he can be better formed for great and heroic deeds than this chief. Suppose them, then, to be equal; when they have met, with two such leaders, what may not a few determined Scots perform?”

Helen sympathised with the cheering prognostications of the hermit; and wishing to learn the name of this rival of a character she had regarded as unparalleled, she asked with a blush, by what title she must call the knight who had undertaken so hazardous an enterprise for her.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HERMIT'S CELL.

“I know not,” returned the hermit; “I never saw your gallant deliverer before yesterday morning. Roused from my orisons by a sudden noise, I beheld a deer rush down the precipice, and fall headlong. As he lay struggling amongst the stones at the entrance of my cave, I just observed an arrow in his side, when a shout issued from the rocks above, and, looking up, I beheld a young warrior, with a bow in his hand, leaping from cliff to cliff, till springing from a high projection on the right, he lit at once at the head of the wounded deer.

“Seeing by his bonnet and plaid that he was a Scot, I emerged from the recess that concealed me, and addressed him with the benediction of the morning. His followers

immediately appeared, and with a stroke of their broad swords slew the animal. The chief left them to dress it for their own refreshment; and on my invitation, entered the cell to share a hermit's fare.

“ I told him who I was, and what had driven me to this seclusion. In return, he informed me of a design he had conceived to stimulate the surrounding chiefs to some exertions for their country; but as he never mentioned his name, I concluded he wished it to remain unrevealed, and therefore I forbore to enquire it. I imparted to him my doubts of the possibility of any single individual being able to arouse the slumbering courage of this country; but his language soon filled me with other thoughts. The arguments he means to use are few and conclusive. They are these:—the perfidy of King Edward; who, deemed a prince of high honour, had been chosen umpire in the cause of Bruce and Baliol. He accepted the task, in the character of a friend to Scotland; but no sooner was he advanced into the heart of our kingdom, and at the head of the large army he had treacherously introduced as a mere appendage of state, than he declared the act of judgment, was his right as liege lord of the realm! This falsehood, which the testimony of men, and our records, disproved at the outset, was not his only baseness: he bought the conscience of Baliol, and adjudged to him the throne. The recreant prince acknowledged him his master; and in that degrading ceremony of homage, he was followed by almost all the Scottish lords. But this vile yielding did not purchase them peace: Edward demanded oppressive services from the King, and the castles of the nobility to be resigned to English governors. These requisitions being remonstrated against by a few of our boldest chiefs, (amongst whom, your illustrious father, gentle lady, stood the most conspicuous,) the tyrant repeated them with additional demands; and prepared to resent the appeal, on the whole nation.

“ Three months have hardly elapsed, since the fatal battle of Dunbar; where, indignant at the accumulated outrages committed on their passive monarch, our irritated nobles at last rose, too late, to assert their rights: but one

defeat drove them to despair. Baliol was taken, and themselves obliged to again swear fealty to their enemy. Then came the seizure of the treasures of our monasteries, the burning of the national records, the sequestration of our property, the banishment of our chiefs, the violation of our women, and the slavery or murder of the poor people yoked to the land. 'The storm of desolation thus raging over our country; how,' cried the young warrior to me, 'can any of her sons shrink from the glory of again attempting her restoration!' He then informed me, that Earl de Warenne (whom Edward had left Lord Warden of Scotland) was ill, and retired to London, leaving Aymer de Valence to be his deputy. To this new tyrant, De Warenne has lately sent a host of mercenaries, to hold the south of Scotland in subjection; and to reinforce Cressingham and Ormsby, two plunderers, who command northwards, from Stirling, to the shores of Sutherland.

"With these representations of the conduct of our oppressors, the brave knight demonstrated the facility with which invaders, drunk with power, and gorged with rapine, could be vanquished by a resolute and hardy people. The absence of Edward, who is now abroad, increases the probability of success. The knight's design is, to infuse his own spirit into the bosoms of the chiefs in this part of the kingdom. By their assistance, to seize the fortresses in the Lowlands, and so form a chain of repulsion against the admission of fresh troops from England. Then, while other chiefs (to whom he means to apply) rise in the Highlands, the Southron garrisons there, being unsupported by supplies, must become an easy prey; and would yield men of consequence, to be exchanged for our countrymen, now prisoners in England. For the present, he wishes to be furnished with troops merely enough to take some castle, of power sufficient to give confidence to his friends. On his becoming master of such a place, it should be the signal for all to declare themselves; and, rising at once, overwhelm Edward's garrisons in every part of Scotland.

"This is the knight's plan; and for your sake, as well as for the cause, I hope the first fortress he gains may be that of Dumbarton: it has always been considered the key of the country."

“ May Heaven grant it, holy father,” returned Helen ; “ and, whoever this knight may be, I pray the blessed Saint Andrew to guide his arms !”

“ If I may venture to guess who he is,” replied the hermit, “ I would say, that noble brow was formed some day to wear a crown.”

“ What !” cried Helen, starting, “ you think this knight is the royal Bruce ?”

“ I am at a loss what to think,” replied the hermit ; “ he has a most princely air ; and there is such an overflowing of soul towards his country, when he speaks of it, that — such love can spring from no other, than the royal heart, created to foster and to bless it.”

“ But is he not too young ?” enquired Helen. “ I have heard my father say, that Bruce, Lord of Annandale, the opponent of Baliol for the crown, was much his senior ; and that his son, the Earl of Carrick, must be now fifty years of age. This knight, if I am any judge of looks, cannot be twenty-five.”

“ True,” answered the hermit ; “ and yet he may be a Bruce.—For it is neither of the two you have mentioned, that I mean ; but the grandson of the one, and the son of the other. You may see by this silver beard, lady, that the winter of my life is far spent. The elder Bruce, Robert, Lord of Annandale, was my contemporary ; we were boys together, and educated at the same college in Icolmkill. He was brave, and passed his manhood in visiting different courts ; at last, marrying a lady of the princely house of Clare, he took her to France, and there left his only son to be brought up under the renowned Saint Lewis.—Young Robert took the cross while quite a youth ; and carrying the banner of the holy King of France to the plains of Palestine, covered himself with glory. In storming a Saracen fortress, he rescued the person of Prince Edward of England. The horrible tyrant, who now tramples on all laws human and divine, was then in the bloom of youth, defending the cause of Christianity ! Think on that, sweet lady, and marvel at the changing power of ambition !

“ From that hour, a strict friendship subsisted between

the two young crusaders : and when Edward mounted the throne of England, he being then the ally of Scotland, the Earl of Annandale, to please his wife and his son, took up his residence at the English court. When the male issue of David failed in the untimely death of our Alexander III. then came the contention between Bruce and Baliol for the vacant crown. Our most venerable chiefs, the guardians of our laws, and the witnesses of the parliamentary settlement which had been made on the house of Bruce during the reign of the late King, all declared for Lord Annandale. He was not only the male heir in propinquity of blood, but his experienced years, and known virtues, made all eager to place him on the throne.

“ Meanwhile Edward, forgetting friendship to his friend, and fidelity to a faithful ally, was undermining the interest of Bruce, and the peace of the kingdom. Inferior rivals to our favourite prince were soon discountenanced ; but by covert ways, with bribes and promises, the King of England raised such an opposition on the side of Baliol, as threatened a civil war. Secure in his right, and averse to plunge his country in blood, Bruce easily fell in with a proposal insidiously hinted to him by one of Edward’s creatures, — ‘ to require that monarch to be umpire between him and Baliol.’ Then it was that Edward, after soliciting the requisition as an honour to be conferred on him, declared it was his right as supreme Lord of Scotland. The Earl of Annandale refused to acknowledge this assumption. Baliol bowed to it ; — and for such obedience, the unrighteous judge gave him the crown. Bruce absolutely refused to acknowledge the justice of this decision ; and to avoid the power of the King who had betrayed his rights, and the jealousy of the other who had usurped them, he immediately left the scene of action ; going over seas to join his son, who happened to be at Paris. But, alas ! even that comfort was denied him, for he died on the road of a broken heart.

“ When his son Robert (who was Earl of Carrick in right of his wife) returned to Britain, he, like his father, disdained to acknowledge Baliol as king. But being more incensed at his successful rival than at the treachery of his false friend Edward, he believed his glossing speeches ;

and — by what infatuation I cannot tell — established his residence at that monarch's court. This forgetfulness of his royal blood, and of the independency of Scotland, has nearly obliterated him from every Scottish heart; for, when we look at Bruce the courtier, we cease to remember Bruce the descendant of St. David — Bruce the valiant knight of the Cross, who bled for true liberty before the walls of Jerusalem.

“ His eldest son may be now about the age of the young knight who has just left us; and when I look on his royal port, and listen to the patriotic fervours of his soul, I cannot but think that the spirit of his noble grandsire has revived in his breast; and that leaving his indolent father to the vassal luxuries of Edward's palace, he is come hither in secret, to arouse Scotland, and to assert his claim.”

“ It is very likely,” rejoined Helen, deeply sighing; “ and may Heaven reward his virtue with the crown of his ancestors ! ”

“ To that end,” replied the hermit, “ shall my hands be lifted up in prayer day and night. May I, O gracious Power ! ” cried he, looking upwards, and pressing the cross to his breast, “ live but to see that hero victorious, and Scotland free; and then ‘ let thy servant depart in peace, since mine eyes will have seen her salvation ! ’ ”

“ Her *salvation*, father ? ” said Helen, timidly. “ Is not that too sacred a word to apply to any thing, however dear, that relates to earth ? ”

She blushed as she spoke; and fearful of having too daringly objected, looked down as she awaited his answer. The hermit observed her attentively; and, with a benign smile, replied, “ Earth and heaven are the work of one Creator. He careth alike for angel and for man; and therefore nothing that he has made is too mean to be the objects of his *salvation*. The word is comprehensive: in one sense, it may signify our redemption from sin and death by the coming of the Lord of life into this world; and in another, it intimates the different means by which Providence decrees the ultimate happiness of men. Happiness can only be found in virtue; virtue cannot exist without liberty; and the seat of liberty is good laws! Hence,

when Scotland is again made free, the bonds of the tyrant who corrupts her principles with temptations, or compels her to iniquity by threats, are broken. Again the honest peasant may cultivate his lands in security, the liberal hand feed the hungry, and industry spread smiling plenty through all ranks. Every man to whom his Maker hath given talents, let them be one or five, may apply them to their use ; and, by eating the bread of peaceful labour, rear families to virtuous action, and the worship of God. The nobles, meanwhile, looking alone to the legislation of Heaven, and to the laws of Scotland, which alike demand justice and mercy from all, will live the fathers of their country, teaching her brave sons that the only homage which does not debase a man is that which he pays to virtue.

“ This it is to be free ; this it is to be virtuous ; this it is to be happy ; this it is to live the life of righteousness, and to die in the hope of immortal glory. Say then, dear daughter, if, in praying for the liberty of Scotland, I said too much in calling it her *salvation* ? ”

“ Forgive me, father,” cried Helen, overcome with shame at having questioned him.

“ Forgive you what ? ” returned he. “ I love the holy zeal which is jealous of allowing objects, dear even to your wishes, to encroach on the sanctuary of heaven. Be ever thus, meek child of the church, and no human idol will be able to usurp that part of your virgin heart which belongs to God.”

Helen blushed. “ My heart, reverend father,” returned she, “ has but one wish — the liberty of Scotland ; and, with that, the safety of my father and his brave deliverers.”

“ Sir William Wallace I never have seen,” rejoined the hermit ; “ but, when he was quite a youth, I heard of his graceful victories in the mimic war of the jousts at Berwick, when Edward first marched into this country under the mask of friendship. From what you have said, I do not doubt his being a worthy supporter of Bruce. However, dear daughter, as it is only a suspicion of mine that the knight is this young prince, for his safety, and for the sake of the cause, we must not let the name escape our lips ; no, not even to your relations when you rejoin them, nor to the

youth whom his humanity put under my protection. Till he reveals his own secret, for us to divulge it would be folly and dishonour."

Helen bowed acquiescence ; and the hermit proceeded to inform her who the youth was whom the stranger had left to be her page.

In addition to what the knight had himself told her of Walter Hay, the unfortunate shepherd boy of the ruined hut, her venerable host narrated that the young warrior, having quitted the holy cell after his first appearance there, soon returned with the wounded youth, whom he had found. He committed him to the care of the hermit, promising to revisit him in his way from the south, and take the recovered Walter under his own protection. " He then left us," continued the old man, " but soon re-appeared with you ; showing, in the strongest language, that he who in spite of every danger succours the sons and daughters of violated Scotland, is proclaimed by the Spirit of Heaven to be her future deliverer and king."

As he ended speaking, he rose ; and, taking Helen by the hand, led her into an inner excavation of the rock, where a bed of dried leaves lay on the ground. " Here, gentle lady," said he, " I leave you to repose. In the evening I expect a lay brother from St. Oran's monastery, and he will be your messenger to the friends you may wish to rejoin. At present, may gentlest seraphs guard your slumbers !"

Helen, fatigued in spirit and in body, thanked the good hermit for his care ; and bowing to his blessing, he left her to repose.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CARTLANE CRAIGS, AND GLENFINLASS.

GUIDED by Ker, Murray led his followers over the Lanark hills, by the most untrodden paths ; and hence avoided even the sight of a Southron soldier.

Cheered by so favourable a commencement of their expedition, they even felt no dismay when, at the gloom of evening, Ker descried a body of armed men at a distance, sitting round a fire, at the foot of a beetling rock, which guards the western entrance to the Cartlane craigs. Murray ordered his men to proceed under covert of the bushes ; and then making the signal (concerted in case of such dilemma), they struck their iron crows into the interstices of the cliff ; and catching at the branches which grew out of its precipitous side, with much exertion, but in perfect silence, at last gained the summit. That effected, they pursued their way with the same caution, till after a long march, and without encountering a human being, they reached the base of the huge rock which Wallace had made his fortress.

Ker, who expected to find it surrounded by an English army, was amazed at the death-like solitude. "The place is deserted," cried he. "My brave friend, compelled by the extremity of his little garrison, has been obliged to surrender."

"We will ascend and see," was Murray's answer.

Ker led round the rock, to the most accessible point ; and mounting by the projecting stones, with some difficulty gained the top. Silence pervaded every part ; and the rugged cavities at the summit, which had formed the temporary quarters of his comrades, were lonely. On entering the recess, where Wallace used to seek a few minutes' slumber, the moon, which shone full into the cave, discovered something bright, lying in a distant corner. Ker hastily approached it ; recollecting what Wallace had told him, that if, during his absence, he could find means of escape, he would leave some weapon as a sign. A dagger, if it were by the south point, where he must fight his way through the valley ; and an arrow, if it were by the north ; as he should then seek an asylum for his exhausted followers in the wilds of Glenfinlass.

It was the iron head of an arrow, which the moon had silvered ; and Ker, catching it up, with a gladdened countenance exclaimed, "He is safe ! this calls us to Glenfinlass." He then explained to Murray, what had been

the arrangement of Wallace respecting this sign, and without hesitation the young lord decided to follow him.

Turning towards the northern part of the cliff, they came to a spot, beneath which had been the strongest guard of the enemy, but now, like the rest, it was entirely abandoned. A narrow winding path led from this rocky platform, to a fall of water, roaring and rushing by the mouth of a large cavern. After they had descended the main craig they clambered over the top of this cave; and entering upon another sweep of rugged hills, commenced a rapid march.

Traversing the lower part of Stirlingshire, they crossed Graham's Dyke*; and pursuing their course westward, left Stirling castle far to the right. They ascended the Oichel hills; and proceeding along the wooded heights which overhang the banks of Teith, forded that river, and entered at once into the broad valley, which opened to them a distant view of Ben Lomond and Ben Lidi.

"There," exclaimed Ker, extending his hand towards the cloud-capped Lidi; "beneath the shadow of that mountain, we shall find the light of Scotland, our dear master in arms!"

At this intimation, the wearied Murrays, — like seamen, long harassed on a tempestuous ocean, at sight of a port, — uttered a shout of joy; and hastening forward with renovated strength, met a foaming river in their path. Despising all obstacles, they rushed in, and, buffeting the waves, soon found a firm footing on the opposite shore. The sun shone cheerily above their heads; and illuminating the sides of the mountains, hung their umbrageous defiles with a dewy splendour, Ben Lidi, the standard of their hope, seemed to wave them on, as the white clouds streamed from its summit; or, rolling down its dark sides, floated in strange visionary shapes over the lakes beneath.

When the little troop halted on the shore of Loch Venachoir, the mists which had lingered on the brow of Lidi,

* The great wall of Severus, which runs between Abercorn and Kirkpatrick, being attacked by the Scots at the time the Romans abandoned Britain, a huge breach was made in it by Graham (or Greame) the uncle of the young king of Scots. By this achievement he conquered the whole of the country as far as the Cheviots; and the wall of Severus has since been called Graham's Dyke.

slowly descended into the valley ; and covering the mouth of the pass that led from the loch, seemed to shut them at once between the mountain, and that world of waters. Ker, who had never been in these tracks before, wondered at their sublimity ; and became alarmed, lest they should lose their way amid such infinite windings. But Murray, who remembered having once explored them with his father, led promptly forward, by a steep rough road in the side of the mountain. As they clung by the slippery rocks which overhung the lake, its mists dissolved into a heavy shower ; and, by degrees clearing away, discovered the shining heads of Ben Lomond and Ben Chochan.

The party soon entered a precipitous labyrinth of craigs ; and, passing onward, gradually descended amid pouring torrents, and gaping chasms overlaced with branching trees, till the augmented roar of waters intimated to Murray, they drew near the great fall of Glenfinlass. The river, though rushing on its course with the noise of thunder, was scarcely discerned through the thick forest which groaned over its waves. Here towered a host of stately pines ; and there, the lofty beeches, birches, and mountain oak, bending over the flood, interwove their giant arms ; forming an arch so impenetrable, that while the sun brightened the tops of the mountains, all beneath lay in deepest midnight.

The awful entrance to this sublime valley, struck the whole party with a feeling that made them pause. It seemed as if to these sacred solitudes, hidden in the very bosom of Scotland, no hostile foot dared intrude. Murray looked at Ker : “ We go, my friend, to arouse the genius of these wilds. Here are the native fastnesses of Scotland ; and from this pass, the spirit will issue, that is to bid her enslaved sons and daughters be free.”

They entered : and with beating hearts pursued their way along the western border of Loch Lubnaig, till the royal heights of Craignacoheilig showed their summits, covered with heath and many an ivied turret. The forest, stretching far over the valley, lost its high trees in the shadows of the surrounding mountains, and told them they were now in the centre of Glenfinlass.

Ker put his bugle to his lips, and sounded the pibroch of Ellerslie. A thousand echoes returned the notes ; and after a pause, which allowed the last response to die away, the air was answered by a horn from the heights of Craignacoheilg. An armed man then appeared on the rock, leaning forwards. Ker drew near, and taking off his his bonnet, called aloud : — “ Stephen ! It is William Ker who speaks. I come with the Lord Andrew Murray of Bothwell, to the support of our commander Sir William Wallace.”

At these words, Stephen placed his bugle to his mouth, and in a few minutes the rock was covered with the members of its little garrison. Women and children appeared, shouting with joy ; and the men, descending the side next the glen, hastened to bid their comrade welcome. One advanced towards Murray, whom he instantly recognised to be Sir Roger Kirkpatrick of Torthorald. The chiefs saluted each other ; and Lord Andrew pointed to his men : “ I have brought,” said he, “ these few brave fellows to the aid of Sir William Wallace. They should have been more, but for new events of Southron outrage. Yet I am impatient to lead them to the presence of my uncle’s preserver.”

Kirkpatrick’s answer disappointed the eager spirit of the young warrior : “ I am sorry, brave Murray, that you have no better knight to receive you than myself. I, and the gallant chief, have not yet met ; but I am in arms for him ; and the hour of retribution for all our injuries, I trust, is at hand.”

“ But where is Sir William Wallace ? ” demanded Murray.

“ Gone towards the Forth, to rouse that part of sleeping Scotland. If all he meet, have my spirit, they will not require a second call. Now is the time to aim the blow ; and thanks to the accident which brought me the welcome news, that an arm was raised that would strike it home.”

As he spoke, he led Murray to the rampart-like cliffs which crown the summit of Craignacoheilg. In the midst stood a tower, which had once been a favourite hunting lodge of the great King Fergus. There he welcomed him

a second time : “ This,” said he, “ is the far-famed *lodge of the three kings* : here did our lion, Fergus, attended by his royal allies, Durstus the Pict, and Dionethus the Briton, spread his board during their huntings in Glenfinlass !* And here, eight hundred years ago, did the same heroic prince, form the plans which saved his kingdom from a foreign yoke ! On the same spot, we will lay ours ; and in their completion, rescue Scotland from a tyranny, more intolerable than that which menaced him. Yes, Murray ; there is not a stone in this building that does not call aloud to us, to draw the sword, and hold it unsheathed, till our country be free.”

“ And by the ghost of that same Fergus, I swear,” exclaimed Murray, “ that my honest claymore shall never shroud its head, while an invader be left alive in Scotland.”

Kirkpatrick caught him in his arms : — “ Brave son of the noble Bothwell, thou art after mine own heart ! The blow which the dastard Cressingham durst aim at a Scottish chief, still smarts upon my cheek ; and rivers of his countrymen’s blood shall wash out the stain. After I had been persuaded by his serpent eloquence, to swear fealty to Edward on the defeat at Dunbar, I vainly thought that Scotland had only changed a weak and unfortunate prince, for a wise and victorious King : but when in the courts of Stirling, I heard Cressingham propose to the barons north of the dyke, that they should give their strongest castles into English hands ; when I opposed the measure with all the indignation of a Scot who saw himself betrayed, he first tried to overturn my arguments ; and finding that impossible ; while I repeated them with redoubled force — he struck me ! — Powers of earth and heaven, what was then the tempest of my soul ! — I drew my sword — I would have laid him dead at my feet, had not my obsequious countrymen held my arm, and dragged me from the apartment.

“ Covered with dishonour by a blow I could not avenge, I fled to my brother-in-law Sir John Scott, of

* This is the tradition respecting Craignacoheilig. Glenfinlass was the favourite chase of the Scottish monarchs.

Loch Doine. With him I buried my injury from the world; but it lived in my heart;—it haunted me day and night, calling for revenge.

“In such an hour, how did I receive the tidings, that Sir William Wallace was in arms against the tyrant!—It was the voice of retribution, calling me to peace of mind!—Even my bed-ridden kinsman partook my emotions; and with his zealous concurrence, I led a band of his hardiest clansmen, to reinforce the brave men of Lanark on this rock.

“Two days, I have now been here; awaiting in anxious impatience the arrival of Wallace. — Oh! we will mingle our injured souls together! He has made one offering; I must make another:—We shall set forth to Stirling; and there, in the very heart of his den, sacrifice the tiger Cressingham to the vengeance of our wrongs.”

“But what, my brave friend,” asked Murray, “are the forces you deem sufficient for so great an enterprise? How many fighting men may be counted of Wallace’s own company, besides your own?”

“We have about a hundred,” replied Kirkpatrick, “including yours.”

“How inadequate to storm so formidable a place as Stirling castle!” returned Murray. “Having, indeed, passed the Rubicon, we must go forward; but resolution, not rashness, should be the principle of our actions.—And my opinion is, that a few minor advantages obtained, our countrymen would flock to our standard; the enemy would be intimidated; and we should carry thousands, instead of hundreds, before the walls of Stirling. To attempt it now, would invite defeat, and pluck upon us the ruin of our entire project.”

“You are right, young man,” cried Kirkpatrick; “my grey head, rendered impetuous by insult, did not pause on the blind temerity of my scheme. I would rather, for years watch the opportunity of taking a signal revenge, than not accomplish it at last: Oh! I would rather waste all my life in these solitary wilds, and know that at the close of it I should see the blood of Cressingham on these hands, than live a prince and die unrevenged!”

Stephen and Ker now entered: the latter paid his respects to Sir Roger; and the former informed Murray, that having disposed his present followers with those who had arrived before, he was come to lead their lord to some refreshment in the banqueting-room of the tower. "What?" cried Murray, full of glad amazement: "is it possible that my cousin's faithful band, has reached its destination? None other belonging to Bothwell castle, had any chance of escaping its gaoler's hands."

Kirkpatrick interrupted Stephen's reply, by saying, that while their guests were at the board, he would watch the arrival of certain expresses from two brave Drummonds, each of whom were to send him a hundred men: "So my good Lord Andrew," cried he, striking him on the shoulder, "shall the snow-launch gather, that is to fall on Edward to his destruction!"

Murray heartily shared his zeal: and bidding him a short adieu, followed Stephen and Ker into the hall. A haunch of venison of Glenfinlass, smoked on the board; and goblets of wine from the bounteous cellars of Sir John Scott, brightened the hopes which glowed in every heart.

While the young chieftains were recruiting their exhausted strength, Stephen sat at the table, to satisfy the anxiety of Murray to know how the detachment from Bothwell had come to Craignacoheilg; and by what fortunate occurrence, or signal act of bravery, Wallace could have escaped with his whole train from the foe-surrounded Cartlane craigs.

"Heaven smiled on us!" replied Stephen. "The very evening of the day in which Ker left us, there was a carousal in the English camp. We heard the sound of the song and of riot; and of many an insult cast upon our besieged selves. But about an hour after sunset, the noise sunk by degrees; a no insufficient hint that the revellers, overcome by excess, had fallen asleep. At this very time, owing to the heat of the day, so great a vapour had been exhaled from the lake beneath, that the whole of the northern side of the fortress cliff was covered with a mist so exceedingly thick, we could not discern each other at a foot's distance. 'Now is the moment,' said our gallant

leader ; ‘ the enemy are stupified with wine, the rock is clothed in a veil : — it is the shield of God that is held before us ! under its shelter let us pass from their hands ! ’

“ He called us together ; and making the proper dispositions, commanded the children and women, on their lives, to keep silence. He then led us to the top of the northern cliff : it overhung a cave, and also a strong guard of the enemy. By the assistance of a rope, held above by several men, our resolute chief, (twisting it round one arm to steady him, and with the other catching by the projecting stones of the precipice,) made his way down the rock, and was the first who descended. He stood at the bottom, enveloped in the cloud which shrouded the mountain, till all the men of the first division had cleared the height ; he then marshalled them with their pikes towards the foe, in case of an alarm. But all remained quiet on that spot ; although the sounds of voices, both in song and laughter, intimated that the utmost precaution was still necessary, as a wakeful part of the enemy were not far distant.

“ Wallace re-ascended the rock half-way ; and receiving the children, which their trembling mothers lowered into his arms ; he handed them to the old men, who carried them safely through the bushes which obscured the cave’s mouth. The rest of our little garrison soon followed ; when our sentinels, receiving the signal that all were safe, drew silently from their guard, and closed our march through the cavern.

“ This effected, we blocked up its mouth ; that, should our escape be discovered, the enemy might not find the direct road we had taken.

“ We pursued our course without stop or stay till we reached the hospitable valleys of Stirlingshire. Here some kind shepherds gave the women and children temporary shelter ; and Wallace, seeing that if any thing were to be done for Scotland, he must swell his host, put the party under my guidance ; giving me orders, that when they were rested, I should march them to Glenfinlass ; here to await his return. Selecting ten men ; with that small band he turned towards the Forth ; hoping to meet some valiant

friends in that part of the country, ready to embrace her cause.

“ He had hardly been an hour departed, when Dugald observed a procession of monks descending the opposite mountain. They drew near, and halted in the glen. A crowd of women from the neighbouring hills had followed the train, and were now gathering round a bier, which the monks set down. I know not by what happy fortune I came close to the leader of the procession, but he saw something in my old rough features that declared me an honest Scot. ‘ Friend,’ whispered he, ‘ for charity, conduct us to some safe place, where we may withdraw this bier from the sacrilegious eye of curiosity.’

“ I made no hesitation ; but desired the train to follow me into a byre belonging to the good shepherd who was my host. On this motion, the common people went away ; and the monks entered the place.

“ When the travellers threw up their hoods, which as mourners they had worn over their faces, I could not help exclaiming — ‘ Alas, for the glory of Scotland, that this goodly group of stout young men, rather wore the helmet than the cowl !’ — ‘ How !’ asked their principal, who did not appear to have seen thirty years ; ‘ do we not pray for the glory of Scotland ? — Such is our weapon.’ — ‘ True,’ replied I ; ‘ but while Moses prayed, Joshua fought. God gives the means of glory, that they should be used.’ — ‘ But for what, old veteran,’ said the monk, with a penetrating look, ‘ should we exchange our cowl for the helmet ? knowest thou any thing of the Joshua who would lead us to the field ?’ — There was something in the young priest’s eyes, that seemed to contradict his pacific words : they flashed an impetuous fire. My reply was short : ‘ Are you a Scot ?’ — ‘ I am, in soul and in arms.’ — ‘ Then knowest thou not the chief of Ellerslie ?’ As I spoke, for I stood close to the bier, I perceived the pall shake. The monk answered my last question, with an exclamation : — ‘ You mean Sir William Wallace !’

“ ‘ Yes !’ I replied. The bier shook more violently at these words, and, with my hair bristling from my head, I saw the pall hastily thrown off, and a beautiful youth, in a

shroud, start from it, crying aloud, — ‘ Then is our pilgrimage at an end! — Lead us to him!’

“ The monk perceived my terror, and hastily exclaimed, ‘ Fear not! he is alive — and seeks Sir William Wallace. His pretended death was a stratagem, to ensure our passage through the English army; for we are soldiers like yourself.’ As he spoke, he opened his grey habit, and showed me the mailed tartans beneath.”

“ What, then!” interrupted Murray, “ these monks were my faithful clansmen?”

“ The same,” replied Stephen: “ I assured them they might now resume their own characters; for all who inhabited the valley we were then in, were true, though poor and aged Scots. The young had long been drafted by Edward’s agents, to fight his battles abroad.”

“ ‘ Ah!’ interrupted the shrouded youth, ‘ are we a people that can die for the honour of this usurper, and are we ignorant how to do it for our country? Lead us, soldier of Wallace,’ cried he, stepping resolutely on the ground, ‘ lead us to your brave master; and tell him that a few determined men are come to shed their blood for him and Scotland.’

“ This astonishing youth (for he did not appear to be more than fifteen) stood before me in his robes of death, like the spirit of some bright-haired son of Fingal: I looked on him with admiration; and explaining our situation, told him whither Wallace was gone; and of our destination to await him in the forest of Glenfinlass.

“ While your brave clansmen were refreshing themselves, we learnt from Kenneth their conductor, that the troop left Bothwell under an expectation of your soon following them. They had not proceeded far, before their scouts perceived the outposts of the English, which surrounded Cartlane craigs; and to avoid this danger, they took a circuitous path, in hopes of finding some unguarded entrance. They reached the convent of St. Columba, at the western side of the craigs. Kenneth knew the abbot; and entering it under covert of the night, obtained permission for his men to rest there. The youth, now their companion, was a student in the church. He had been sent thither by his

mother, a pious lady, in the hope that, as he is of a very gentle nature, he would attach himself to the sacred tonsure. But courage often springs with most strength in the softest frames.

“ The moment this youth discovered our errand, he tried every persuasive to prevail on the abbot to permit him to accompany us. But his entreaties were vain, till, wrought up to vehement anger, he threatened that if he were prevented joining Sir William Wallace he would take the earliest opportunity to escape, and commit himself to the peril of the English pikes.

“ ‘ Seeing him determined, the abbot granted his wish : — and then it was,’ said Kenneth, ‘ that the youth seemed inspired. It was no longer an enthusiastic boy, we saw before us, but an angel, gifted with wisdom to direct, and enterprise to lead us. It was he proposed disguising ourselves as a funeral procession : and while he painted his blooming countenance, of a death-like paleness, and stretched himself on this bier, the abbot sent to the English army, to request permission for a party of monks to cross the craigs to the cave of St. Columba in Stirlingshire, whither they carried a dead brother to be entombed. Our young leader hoped we might thus find an opportunity to apprise Wallace we were friends, and ready to reinforce his exhausted garrison.

“ ‘ On our entrance into the passes of the craigs,’ continued Kenneth, ‘ the English commander mentioned the fate of Bothwell, and the captivity of Lord Mar ; and with very little courtesy to sons of the church, ordered the bier to be opened, to see whether it did really contain a corpse, or provisions for our besieged countrymen. We had certainly expected this investigation ;’ else we might as well have wrapped the trunk of a tree in the shroud we carried, as a human being. We knew that the superstitious hatred of the Southrons, would not allow them to touch a Scottish corpse, and therefore we feared no detection from the eye’s examination alone. This ceremony once over, we expected to have passed on without farther notice ; and in that case the youth would have left his pall, and performed the remainder of his journey in a similar disguise with the rest.

But the strict watch of an English guard, confined him wholly to the bier. In hopes of at last evading this vigilance, on pretence of a vow of the deceased, that his bearers should perform a pilgrimage throughout the craigs, we traversed them in every direction; and, I make no doubt, would have finally wearied out our guard, and gained our point, had not the circumstance transpired of Wallace's escape.

“ ‘ How he had effected it, his enemies could not guess. Not a man of the besiegers was missing from his post; and not an avenue appeared, by which they could trace his flight: but gone he was, and with him his whole train. On this disappointment, the Southrons retired to Glasgow, to their commander in chief, to give as good an account as they could of so disgraceful a termination of their siege. Dismayed at this intelligence, the guard hurried us into Stirlingshire, and left us at the other side of the mountain. But even then we were not free to release our charge, for, attracted by our procession, the country people followed us into the valley. Had we not met with you, it was our young chief's design to have thrown off our disguises in the first safe place; and, divided into small bands, have severally sought Sir William Wallace.’ ”

“ But where,” demanded Murray, who had listened with delighted astonishment to this recital, “ where is this admirable youth? Why, if Kenneth have learnt I am arrived, does he not bring him to receive my thanks and friendship?”

“ It is my fault,” returned Stephen, “ that Kenneth will not approach you till your repast is over. I left him to see your followers properly refreshed. And for the youth, he seems timid of appearing before you. Even his name I cannot make known to you, till he reveals it himself; none know him here, by any other than that of Edwin. He has mentioned to-morrow morning for the interview.”

“ I must submit to his determination,” replied Murray; “ but I am at a loss to guess why so brave a creature should hesitate to meet me. I can only suppose, he dislikes the idea of resigning the troop he has so well con-

ducted; and if so, I shall think it my duty to yield its command to him."

"Indeed he richly deserves it," returned Stephen; "for the very soul of Wallace seemed transfused into his breast, as he cheered us through our long march from the valley to Glenfinlass. He played with the children, heartened up the women; and when the men were weary, and lagged by the way, he sat him down on the nearest stones, and sang to us legends of our ancestors, till every nerve was braced with warlike emulation, and, starting up, we proceeded onward with resolution, and even gaiety.

"When we arrived at Craignacoheilig, as the women were in great want, I suddenly recollected that I had an old friend in the neighbourhood. When a boy, I had been the playfellow of Sir John Scott of Loch Doine; and though I understood he was an invalid, I went to him. While I told my tale, his brother-in-law, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, took fire at my relation, and declared his determination to accompany me to Craignacoheilig. When he joined our band, on the summit of this rock, he hailed the men as brethren, the women as sisters. He took the children in his arms, and while he held their hands in his, vehemently addressed their mothers, 'Let not these hands be baptized*, till they have bathed in the blood of the foe. Mercy belongs not to the enemy, now doomed to fall beneath their fathers' swords!'"

"It is, indeed, a deadly contest," rejoined Murray; "for evil has been the example of that foe. How many innocent bosoms have their steel pierced! How many helpless babes have their merciless hands dashed against the stones!—Oh, ruthless war! even a soldier trembles, to contemplate thy horrors."

"Only till he can avenge them!" cried a stern voice, entering the apartment: it was Kirkpatrick's, and he pro-

* It was a custom with Scottish chiefs, when any feud existed between their families, to leave the right hand of their children untouched by the holy water in baptism, as a sign that no law, even of Heaven, should prevent them taking revenge. From this usage Kirkpatrick declares, that the hands of the children in Wallace's train, shall be left unchristened till they have taken vengeance on their oppressors.

ceeded: "When vengeance is in our grasp, tell me, brave Murray, who will then tremble? Dost thou not feel retribution in thine own hands? Dost thou not see the tyrant's blood at thy feet? As he spoke, he looked down, with a horrid exultation in his eyes; and, bursting into a more horrible laugh, struck his hand several times on his heart: "It glads me! it glads me! I shall see it—and this arm shall assist to pull him down."

"His power in Scotland may fall," returned Murray; "but Edward will be too careful of his life to come within reach of our steel."

"That may be," rejoined Kirkpatrick; "but my dagger shall yet drink the blood of his agents. Cressingham shall feel my foot upon his neck! Cressingham shall see that hand torn from its wrist, which durst violate the unsullied cheek of a true Scotsman. Murray, I cannot live unrevenged."

As he spoke, he quitted the apartment; and with a countenance of such tremendous fate, that the young warrior doubted it was human; it spoke not the noble resolves of patriotism, but the portentous malignity with which the great adversary of mankind determines the ruin of nations: it seemed to wither the grass as he moved; and Murray almost thought that the clouds darkened, as the gloomy knight issued from the porch into the open air.

Kenneth Mackenzie joyfully entered the hall. Murray received him with a warm embrace; and, soon after, Stephen Ireland led the wearied chieftain to a bed of freshly gathered heath, prepared for him in an upper chamber.

CHAPTER XIX.

CRAIGNACOEILG.

SLEEP, the gentle sister of that awful power, which shrouds us in his cold bosom, and bears us in still repose to the blissful wakefulness of eternal life:—she, sweet restorer!

wraps us in her balmy embraces : and extracting from our wearied limbs the effects of every toil, safely relinquishes us at morn, to the new-born vigour that is her gift ; to the gladsome breezes, which call us forth to labour and enjoyment.

Such was the rest of the youthful Murray, till the shrill notes of a hundred bugles, piercing his ear, made him start. He listened ; they sounded again. The morning had fully broken. He sprung from his couch, hurried on his armour, and snatching up his lance and target, issued from the tower. Several women were flying past the gate. On seeing him they exclaimed ; — “ The Lord Wallace is arrived. — His bugles have sounded — our husbands are returned ! ”

Murray followed their eager footsteps, and reached the edge of the rock just as the brave group were ascending. A stranger was also there, whom, from his extreme youth and elegance, he judged must be the young protector of his clansmen ; but he forbore to address him, until they should be presented to each other by Wallace himself.

It was indeed the same. On hearing the first blast of the horn, the youthful chieftain had started from his bed of heath, and buckling on his brigandine, rushed to the rock ; but at the sight of the noble figure which first gained the summit, the young hero fell back : an undescribable awe checked his steps ; and he stood at a distance, while Kirkpatrick welcomed the chief, and introduced Lord Andrew Murray. Wallace received the latter with a glad smile ; and taking him warmly by the hand, “ My gallant friend,” said he, “ with such assistance, I hope to reinstate your brave uncle in Bothwell castle ; and soon to cut a passage, to even a mightier rescue ! We must carry off Scotland from the tyrant’s arms ; or ” — added he in a graver tone, “ we shall only rivet her chains the closer.”

“ I am but a poor auxiliary,” returned Murray ; “ my troop is a scanty one, for it is of my own gathering. It is not my father’s, nor my uncle’s strength, that I bring along with me. But there is one here,” continued he, “ who has preserved a party of men, sent by my cousin Lady Helen Mar, almost double my numbers.”

At this reference to the youthful warrior, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick discerned him at a distance ; and hastened towards him, while Murray briefly related to Wallace the extraordinary conduct of this unknown. On being told that the chief waited to receive him, the youth hastened forward with a trepidation he never had felt before ; but it was a trepidation that did not subtract from his own worth : it was the timidity of a noble heart, which believed it approached one of the most perfect among mortals ; and while its anxious pulse beat to emulate such merit, a generous consciousness of measureless inferiority, embarrassed him with a confusion so amiable, that Wallace, who perceived his extreme youth and his blushes, opened his arms and embraced him. “ Brave youth,” cried he, “ I trust that the power which blesses our cause, will enable me to return you, with many a well-earned glory, to the bosom of your family !”

Edwin was encouraged by the frank address of a hero, whom he expected to have found reserved, and wrapped in the deepest glooms of the fate which had roused him to be the thunderbolt of Heaven ; and when he saw a benign, though pale countenance, hail him with smiles, he made a strong effort to shake off the awe with which the divine dignity of the figure and mien of Wallace had oppressed him ; and with a still more mantling blush he replied : — “ My family are worthy of your esteem ; my father is brave : but my mother, fearing for me, her favourite son, prevailed on him to put me into a monastery. Dreading the power of the English, even there she allowed none but the abbot to know who I was. And, as she chose to hide my name ; and I have burst from my concealment, without her knowledge ; till I do something worthy of that name, and deserving her pardon, permit me, noble Wallace, to follow your footsteps by the simple appellation of Edwin.”

“ Noble boy,” returned the chief, “ your wish shall be respected. We urge you no further to reveal, what such innate bravery must shortly proclaim, in the most honourable manner.”

The whole of the troop having ascended ; while their

wives, children, and friends, were rejoicing in their embraces ; Wallace asked some questions relative to Bothwell, and Murray briefly related the disasters which had happened there.

“ My father,” added he, “ is still with the Lord of Lochawe ; and thither I sent, to request him to despatch to the Cartlane craigs all the followers he took with him into Argyleshire. But as things are, would it not be well to send a messenger to Kilchurn castle, to say that you have sought refuge in Glenfinlass ?”

“ Before he could arrive,” returned Wallace, “ I hope we shall be where Lord Bothwell’s reinforcements may reach us by water. Our present object must be the Earl of Mar. He is the first Scottish earl who has hazarded his estates and life for Scotland ; and as her best friend, his liberation must be our first enterprize. In my circuit, through two or three eastern counties, a promising increase has been made to our little army. The Frasers of Oliver castle, have given me two hundred men ; and the brave Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, whom I met in West Lothian, has not only brought fifty stout Scots to my command, but, as the hereditary standard-bearer* of the kingdom, has come himself, to carry the royal banner of Scotland to glory or oblivion.”

“ To glory !” cried Murray, waving his sword ; “ O ! not while a Scot survives, shall that golden lion † again lick the dust !”

“ No,” cried Kirkpatrick, his eyes flashing fire ; “ rather

* This Sir Alexander Scrymgeour was the descendant of the two renowned knights of that name, who signalised themselves by similar acts of bravery in the reigns of Malcolm III. and Alexander I. Their name was originally Carron ; and the reason of its change is thus recorded : — During a rebellion of Malcolm III.’s northern subjects, that monarch was dangerously beset by them on the banks of the Spey. It was necessary he should cross the river, then very perilous in its current, and a strong body of the enemy lined the opposite shore to prevent his landing. The standard-bearer of the royal army, at sight of these dangers, made a halt. The king, in displeasure, snatched the standard from his hand, and gave it to Sir Alexander Carron, who immediately plunged into the river and swimming to the other side performed prodigies of valour amongst the rebels. For this service Malcolm gave to him and his posterity the name of Scrymgeour (sharp fight), and proclaimed him his royal standard-bearer in the Scottish army. This post was made hereditary in the family, by Alexander I. to reward the son of the first of the name of Scrymgeour, for an action of similar loyalty. Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, the descendant of these heroes, and the friend of Sir William Wallace, proved himself in every way worthy of his ancestors.

† A lion gules, in a field d’or, is the arms of Scotland.

may every Scot and every Southron, fall in the struggle, and fill one grave! Let me," cried he, sternly grasping the hilt of his sword, and looking upwards; "let me, oh, Saviour of mankind, live but to see the Forth and the Clyde, so often reddened with our blood, dye the eastern and the western oceans, with the vital flood of these our foes; and when none is spared, then let me die in peace."

The eyes of Wallace glanced on the young Edwin, who stood gazing on Kirkpatrick; and turning on the knight, with a powerful look of reprehension — "Check that prayer," cried he; "remember, my brave companion, what the Saviour of mankind was; and then think, whether he who offered life to all the world, will listen to so damning an invocation. If we would be blessed in the contest, we must be merciful."

"To whom?" exclaimed Kirkpatrick; "to the robbers, who tear from us our lands; to the ruffians, who wrest from us our honours? But you are patient; you never received a blow!"

"Yes," cried Wallace, turning paler; "a heavy one, — on my heart."

"True," returned Kirkpatrick; "your wife fell under the steel of a Southron governor; and you slew him for it! You were revenged; your feelings were appeased."

"Not the death of fifty thousand governors," replied Wallace, "could appease my feelings. Revenge were insufficient to satisfy the yearnings of my soul." For a moment he covered his agitated features with his hand, and then proceeded; "I slew Heselrigge, because he was a monster, under whom the earth groaned. My sorrow, deep, deep as it was — was but one of many, which his rapacity, and his nephew's licentiousness, had produced. Both fell beneath my arm; but I do not denounce the whole nation, without reserve! — When the sword of war is drawn, all who resist must conquer or fall: but there are some noble English, who abhor the tyranny they are obliged to exercise over us; and when they declare such remorse, shall they not find mercy at our hands? Surely, if not for humanity, for policy's sake, we ought to give quarter: for

the exterminating sword, if not always victorious, incurs the ruin it threatens. I even hope, that by our righteous cause, and our clemency, we shall not only gather our own people to our legions, but turn the hearts of the poor Welsh, and the misled Irish, whom the usurper has forced into his armies; and so confront him with troops of his own levying. Many of the English were too just to share in the subjugation of the country, they had sworn to befriend. And their less honourable countrymen, when they see Scotsmen no longer consenting to their own degradation, may take shame to themselves, for assisting to betray a confiding people."

"That may be," returned Kirkpatrick; "but surely you would not rank Aymer de Valence, who lords it over Dumbarton; and Cressingham, who acts the tyrant in Stirling; you would not rank them amongst these conscientious English?"

"No," replied Wallace; "the haughty oppression of the one, and the wanton cruelty of the other, have given Scotland too many wounds, for me to hold a shield before them; meet them, and I leave them to your sword."

"And by heavens!" cried Kirkpatrick, gnashing his teeth with the fury of a tiger, "they shall know its point!"

Wallace then informed his friends, he purposed marching next morning, by day-break, towards Dumbarton castle:—"When we make the attack," said he, "it must be in the night; for I propose seizing it by storm."

Murray and Kirkpatrick joyfully acquiesced. Edwin smiled an enraptured assent:—and Wallace, with many a gracious look and speech, disengaged himself from the clinging embraces of the weaker part of the garrison; who, seeing in him the spring of their husbands' might, and the guard of their own safety, clung to him as to a presiding deity.

"You, my dear countrywomen," said he, "shall find a home for your aged parents, your children, and yourselves, with the venerable Sir John Scott of Loch Doine. You are to be conducted thither this evening; and there await in comfort, the happy return of your husbands;

whom Providence now leads forth, to be the champions of your country."

Filled with enthusiasm, the women uttered a shout of triumph; and embracing their husbands, declared they were ready to resign them wholly to Heaven, and Sir William Wallace.

Wallace left them with these tender relatives, from whom they were so soon to part; and retired with his chieftains, to arrange the plan of his proposed attack. Delighted with the glory which seemed to wave him from the pinnacles of Dumbarton rock, Edwin listened in profound silence to all that was said; and then hastened to his quarters, to prepare his armour for the ensuing morning.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CLIFFS OF LOCH LUBNAIG.

IN the cool of the evening, while the young chieftain was thus employed, Kenneth entered, to tell him, that Sir William Wallace had called out his little army, to see its strength and numbers. Edwin's soul had become not more enamoured of the panoply of war, than of the gracious smiles of his admired leader; and at this intelligence, he threw his plaid over his brigandine, and placing a swan-plumed bonnet on his brows, hastened forth to meet his general.

The heights of Craignacoheilg echoed with thronging footsteps; and a glittering light seemed issuing from her woods, as the rays of the descending sun glanced on the arms of her assembling warriors.

The thirty followers of Murray appeared, just as the two hundred Frasers entered from an opening in the rocks. Blood mounted into his face, as he compared his inferior numbers, and recollected the obligation they were to repay, and the greater one he was now going to incur.—However, he threw the standard, worked by Helen, on his shoulder, and turning to Wallace, "Behold," cried he,

pointing to his men ; “ the poor man’s mite ! It is great, for it is my all ! ”

“ Great indeed, brave Murray ! ” returned Wallace, “ for it brings me a host in yourself. ”

“ I will not disgrace my standard ! ” said he, lowering the banner staff to Wallace. He started, when he saw the flowing lock, which he could not help recognising. “ This is my betrothed, ” continued Murray in a gayer tone ; “ I have sworn to take her for better for worse ; and I pledge you my troth, nothing but death shall part us ! ”

Wallace grasped his hand : — “ And I pledge you mine, that the head whence it grew shall be laid low, before I suffer so generous a defender to be separated, dead or alive, from this standard. ” His eyes glanced at the impress : “ Thou art right, ” continued he ; “ God doth indeed arm thee ! and in the strength of a righteous cause, thou goest with the confidence of success, to embrace victory as a bride ! ”

“ No ; I am only the bridegroom’s man ! ” replied Murray, gaily moving off : “ I shall be content with a kiss or two from the handmaids, and leave the lady for my general. ”

“ Happy, happy, youth ! ” said Wallace to himself, as his eye pursued the agile footsteps of the young chieftain : “ No conquering affection has yet thrown open thy heart ; no deadly injury hath lacerated it with wounds incurable. Patriotism is a virgin passion in thy breast, and innocence and joy wait upon her ! ”

“ We just muster five hundred men ! ” observed Ker to Wallace ; “ but they are all stout in heart as condition ; and ready, even to-night, if you will it, to commence their march. ”

“ No, ” replied Wallace ; “ we must not over-strain the generous spirit. Let them rest to-night ; and to-morrow’s dawn shall light us through the forest. ”

Ker, who acted as henchman to Wallace, now returned to the ranks, to give the word ; and they all marched forward.

Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, with his golden standard, charged with the lion of Scotland, led the van. Wallace

raised his bonnet from his head, as it drew near. Scrymgeour lowered the staff. Wallace threw up his outstretched hand at this action, but the knight not understanding him, he stepped forward:—"Sir Alexander Scrymgeour," cried he, "that standard must not bow to me. It represents the royalty of Scotland, before which we fight for our liberties. If virtue yet dwell in the house of the valiant Saint David, some of his offspring will hear of this day, and lead it forward to conquest, and to a crown. Till such an hour, let not that standard bend to any man."

Wallace fell back as he spoke; and Scrymgeour bowing his head in sign of acquiescence, marched on.

Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, at the head of his well-appointed Highlanders, next advanced. His blood-red banner streamed to the air; and as it bent to Wallace, he saw that the indignant knight had adopted the device of the hardy king Archaius*; but with a fiercer motto:—"Touch, and I pierce!"

"That man," thought Wallace, as he passed along, "carries a relentless sword in his very eye!"

The men of Loch Doine, a strong, tall, and well armed body, marched on, and gave place to the advancing corps of Bothwell. The eye of Wallace felt as if turning from gloom and horror, to the cheerful light of day, when it fell on the bright and ingenuous face of Murray. Kenneth, with his troop followed; and the youthful Edwin, like Cupid in arms, closed the procession.

Being drawn up in line, their chief, fully satisfied, advanced towards them; and expressing his sentiments of the patriotism which brought them into the field, informed them of his intended march. He then turned to Stephen Ireland: "The sun has now set," said he, "and before dark, you must conduct the families of my worthy Lanarkmen to the protection of Sir John Scott. It is time that age, infancy, and female weakness, should cease their wan-

* Archaius, king of Scotland, having won the love and alliance of Charlemagne and of many other Christian kings, found himself to be so mighty, that he took for his device the Thistle and Rewe, and for his motto, *For my defence*. The Rewe, from its salutary properties, denoting his wisdom in peace; and the Thistle, by its guardian prickles, exemplifying his power in war.

derings with us : to-night we bid them adieu, to meet them again in freedom and prosperity."

As Wallace ceased, and was retiring from the ground, several old men, and young women with their babes in their arms, rushed from behind the ranks, and throwing themselves at his feet, caught hold of his hands and garments : — " We go," said the venerable fathers, " to pray for your welfare : — and sure we are, a crown will bless our country's benefactor, here or in heaven !"

" In heaven," replied Wallace, shaking the plumes of his bonnet over his eyes, to hide the moisture which suffused them ; " I can have no right to any other crown."

" Yes," cried a hoary-headed shepherd ; " you free your country from tyrants, and the people's hearts will proclaim their deliverer their sovereign !"

" May your rightful monarch, worthy patriarch," said Wallace, " whether a Bruce or a Baliol, meet with equal zeal from Scotland at large ; and tyranny must then fall before courage and loyalty !"

The women wept, as they clung to his hand ; and the daughter of Ireland, holding up her child in her arms, presented it to him : " Look on my son !" cried she with energy : " the first word he speaks, shall be Wallace ; the second, liberty. And every drop of milk he draws from my bosom, shall be turned into blood, to nerve a conquering arm, or to flow for his country !"

At this speech, all the women held up their children towards him : — " Here," cried they, " we devote them to Heaven, and to our country ! — Adopt them, noble Wallace, to be thy followers in arms, when, perhaps, their fathers are laid low !"

Unable to speak, Wallace pressed their little faces separately to his lips ; then returning them to their mothers laid his hand on his heart, and answered in an agitated voice, — " They are mine ! — my weal shall be theirs, — my woe, my own." As he spoke, he hurried from the weeping group ; and immersing amid the cliffs, hid himself from their tears, and their blessings.

He threw himself on a shelving rock, whose fern-covered bosom projected over the winding waters of Loch Lubnaig ;

and while his eyes contemplated its serene surface, he sighed, and thought how tranquil was nature, till the rebellious passions of man, wearying of innocent joys, disturbed all, by restlessness and violence.

The mists of evening hung on the gigantic tops of Ben Lidi, and Ben Vorlich ; then sailing forward, by degrees obscured the whole of the mountains ; leaving nothing for the eye to dwell on, but the long silent expanse of the lake beneath.

“ So,” said he, “ did I once believe myself for ever shut in from the world, by an obscurity that promised me happiness, as well as seclusion ! — But the hours of Ellerslie, are gone. No tender wife, will now twine her faithful arms around my neck. No child of Marion’s will ever be pressed to my fond bosom ! — Alas, the angel that sunk my country’s wrongs, to a dreamy forgetfulness in her arms, she was to be immolated, that I might awake ! — My wife, my unborn babe, they both must bleed for Scotland ! — and the sacrifice shall not be yielded in vain. No, Great God !” cried he, stretching his clasped hands towards heaven ; “ endow me with thine own spirit, and I shall yet lead my countrymen to liberty and happiness ! — Let me counsel with thy wisdom ; let me conquer with thine arm ! and when all is finished, give me, O gracious Father ! a quiet grave, beside my wife and child.”

Tears, the first he had shed since the hour in which he last pressed his Marion to his heart, now flowed copiously from his eyes. The women, the children, had aroused all his recollections ; but in so softened a train, that they melted his heart, till he wept. “ It is thy just tribute, Marion !” said he : “ It was blood you shed for me, and shall I check these poor drops ? — Look on me, sweet saint ; best beloved of my soul : — O, hover near me, in the day of battle ; and thousands of thine, and Scotland’s enemies, shall fall before thy husband’s arm !”

The plaintive voice of the Highland pipe, at this moment broke upon his ear. It was the farewell of the patriarch Lindsay, as he and his departing company descended the winding paths of Craignacoheilig. Wallace started on his feet. The separation had then taken

place between his trusty followers, and their families ; and guessing the feelings of those brave men, from what was passing in his own breast, he dried away the traces of his tears ; and once more resuming the warrior's cheerful look, sought that part of the rock where the Lanarkmen were quartered.

As he drew near, he saw some standing on the cliff ; and others leaning over, to catch another glance of the departing group, ere it was lost amid the shades of Glenfinlass.

“ Are they quite gone ? ” asked Dugald. “ Quite,” answered a young man, who seemed to have got the most advantageous situation for a view. “ Then,” cried he, “ may St. Andrew keep them till we meet again ! ”

“ May a greater than St. Andrew hear thy prayer ! ” ejaculated Wallace. At the sound of this response from their chief, they all turned round. “ My brave companions,” said he, “ I come to repay this hour's pang, by telling you, that in the attack of Dumbarton, you shall have the honour of first mounting the walls. I shall be at your head, to sign each brave soldier with a patriot's seal of honour.”

“ To follow you, my Lord,” said Dugald, “ is our duty.”

“ I grant it,” replied the chief ; “ and as I am the leader in that duty, it is mine to dispense to every man his reward ; to prove to all men, that virtue alone is true nobility.”

“ Ah, dearest sir ! ” exclaimed Edwin ; who had been assisting the women to carry their infants down the steep, and, on re-ascending, heard the latter part of this conversation ; “ deprive me not of the aim of my life ! These warriors have had you long ; have distinguished themselves in your eyes ; — deprive me not then of the advantage of being near you ; it will make me doubly brave. O, my dear commander, let me only carry to the grave, the consciousness that, next to yourself, I was the first to mount the rock of Dumbarton ; and you will make me noble indeed ! ”

Wallace looked at him, with a smile of such graciousness

that the youth threw himself into his arms : — “ You will grant my boon ! ”

“ I will ; noble boy ! ” said he : “ act up to your sentiments, and you shall be my brother.”

“ Call me by that name,” cried Edwin ; “ and I will dare any thing.”

“ Then be the first to follow me, on the rock,” said he ; “ and I will lead you to an honour, the highest in my gift ; you shall unloose the chains of the Earl of Mar ! And ye,” continued he, turning to his men ; “ ye shall not find your country slow to commemorate the duty of such sons. Being the first to strike the blow for her freedom, ye shall be the first she will distinguish. I now speak as her minister : and as a badge to times immemorial, I bid you wear the Scottish lion on your shields.”

A shout of proud joy issued from every heart. And Wallace, seeing that honour had dried the tears of regret, left them to repose. He sent Edwin to his rest : and himself, avoiding the other chieftains, retired to his own chamber in the tower.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOCH LOMOND.

PROFOUND as was the rest of Wallace, yet the first clarion of the lark awakened him. The rosy dawn shone in at the window ; and a fresh breeze wooed him with its inspiring breath, to rise and meet it. But the impulse was in his own mind ; he needed nothing outward, to call him to action. Rising immediately, he put on his glittering hauberk ; and issuing from the tower, raised his bugle to his lips, and blew so rousing a blast, that in an instant the whole rock was covered with soldiers.

Wallace placed his helmet on his head, and advanced towards them, just as Edwin had joined him, and Sir Roger Kirkpatrick appeared from the tower. “ Blest be

this morn!" said the old knight: "My sword springs from its scabbard, to meet it:—and ere its good steel be sheathed again," continued he, shaking it sternly; "what deaths may dye its point!"

Wallace shuddered at the ferocity with which his colleague contemplated those features of war, from which every humane soldier would seek to turn his thoughts; that he might encounter it with the steadiness of a man, and not the irresolution of a woman. To hail the field of blood, with the fierceness of a hatred, eager for the slaughter of its victim; to know any joy in combat, but that each contest might render another less necessary; did not enter into the imagination of Wallace, until he had heard, and seen, the infuriate Kirkpatrick. He now talked of the coming battle, with horrid rapture; and told the young Edwin, he should that day see Loch Lomond red with English blood.

Offended at such savageness, but without answering him, Wallace drew towards Murray, and calling to Edwin, ordered him to march at his side. The youth seemed glad of the summons: and Wallace was pleased to observe it, as he thought that a longer stay with one who so grossly overcharged the feelings of honest patriotism, might breed disgust in his innocent mind against a cause which had so furious, and therefore unjust a defender.

"Justice and mercy ever dwell together," said he to Edwin, who now drew near him; "for universal love is the parent of justice as well as of mercy. But implacable Revenge! whence did she spring, but from the head of Satan himself?"

Though their cause appeared the same, never were two spirits more discordant than those of Wallace and Kirkpatrick. But Kirkpatrick did not so soon discover the dissimilarity; as it is easier for purity to descry its opposite, than for foulness to apprehend that any thing can be purer than itself.

The forces being marshalled according to the preconcerted order, the three commanders, with Wallace at their head, led forward.

They passed through the forest of Glenfinlas. And morn-

ing and evening still found them thridding those unsuspected solitudes, in unmolested security.

The sun had just risen, as the little band of patriots, the hope of freedom! emerged upon the eastern bank of Loch Lomond. The bases of the mountains were yet covered with the dispersing mist of the morning, and hardly distinguishable from the blue waters of the lake, which lashed the shore. The newly awakened sheep bleated from the hills; and the umbrageous herbage, dropping dew, seemed glittering with a thousand fairy gems.

“Where is the man who would not fight for such a country!” exclaimed Murray, as he stepped over a bridge of interwoven trees, which crossed one of the mountain streams:—“this land was not made for slaves. Look at these bulwarks of nature! Every mountain-head which forms this chain of hills, is an impregnable rampart against invasion. If Baliol had possessed but half a heart, Edward might have returned even worse than Cæsar;—without a cockle to decorate his helmet.”

“Baliol has found the oblivion he incurred,” returned Wallace; “his son, perhaps, may better deserve the sceptre of such a country.—Let us cut the way; and he who merits the crown will soon appear to claim it.”

“Then it will not be Edward Baliol!” rejoined Scrymgeour: “During the inconsistent reign of his father, I once carried a despatch to him from Scotland. He was then banqueting in all the luxuries of the English court; and such a voluptuary I never beheld!—I left the scene of folly, only praying that so effeminate a prince might never disgrace the throne of our manly race of kings.”

“If such be the tuition of our lords, in the court of Edward—and wise is the policy, for his own views!” observed Ker; “what can we expect from even the Bruce? They were ever a nobler race than the Baliol:—but bad education, and luxury, will debase the most princely minds.”

“I saw neither of the Bruce, when I visited London,” replied Scrymgeour: “the Earl of Carrick was at his house in Cleveland; and Robert Bruce, his eldest son, with the English army in Guienne. But they bore a manly character; particularly young Robert, to whom the trouba-

dours of Aquitaine have given the flattering appellation of *Prince of Chivalry*."

"It would be more to his honour," interrupted Murray, "if he compelled the English to acknowledge him as *Prince of Scotland*. With so much bravery, how can he allow such a civet-cat as Edward Baliol, to bear away the title, which is his by the double right of blood and virtue?"

"Perhaps," said Wallace, "the young lion only sleeps! —The time may come, when both he, and his father, will rise from their lethargy, and throw themselves at once into the arms of Scotland. To stimulate the dormant patriotism of these two princes, by showing them a subject, leading their people to liberty, is one great end of the victories I seek. None other than a brave king can bind the various interests of this distracted country in one; and, therefore, for fair Freedom's sake, my heart turns towards the Bruces, with most anxious hopes."

"For my part," cried Murray, "I have always thought, the lady we will not woo, we have no right to pretend to. If the Bruces will not be at the pains to snatch Scotland from drowning, I see no reason for making them a present, of what will cost us many a wet jacket, before we tug her from the waves. He that wins the day, ought to wear the laurel: and so, once for all, I proclaim him King of good old Albin*, who will have the glory of driving her oppressors beyond her dykes."

Wallace did not hear this last sentiment of Murray's, as it was spoken in a lowered voice in the ear of Kirkpatrick. "I perfectly agree with you," was that knight's reply; "and in the true Roman style, may the death of every Southron now in Scotland, and as many more as fate chooses to yield us, be the preliminary games of his coronation!"

Wallace, who heard this, turned to Kirkpatrick with a gentle rebuke in his eye: "Balaam blest, when he meant to curse!" said he, "but you curse, when you mean to bless. — Such prayers are blasphemy. — For, can we expect a blessing on our arms, when all our invocations are for vengeance, rather than victory?"

"Blood for blood, is only justice!" cried Murray; "and

* Albin was the ancient name of Scotland.

how can you, noble Wallace, as a Scot, and as a man, imply any mercy to the villains who stab us to the heart?"

"I plead not for them," returned Wallace; "but for the poor wretches who follow their leaders, by force, to the field of Scotland; I would not inflict on them, the cruelties we now resent. It is not to aggrieve, but to redress, that we carry arms. If we make not this distinction, we turn courage into a crime; and plant disgrace, instead of honour, upon the warrior's brow."

"I do not understand commiserating the wolves, who have so long made havoc in our country," replied Kirkpatrick; "methinks, such maidenly mercy is rather out of place."

Wallace turned to him with a benign smile: "I will answer you, my valiant friend, by adopting your own figure. It is, that these Southron wolves, may not confound us with themselves, that I wish to show in our conduct, rather the generous ardour of the faithful guardian of the fold, than the rapacious fierceness which equals them with the beasts of the desert. As we are men and Scots, let the burden of our prayers be, the preservation of our country, not the slaughter of our enemies! — The one is an ambition, with which angels may sympathise: — the other, a horrible desire, which speaks the nature of fiends."

"In some cases this may be," replied Sir Roger, a little reconciled to the argument, "but not in mine. My injury yet burns upon my cheek; and as nothing but the life-blood of Cressingham can quench it, I will listen no more to your doctrine, till I am revenged. That done, I shall not forget your lesson."

"Generous Kirkpatrick!" exclaimed Wallace, "nothing that is really cruel can dwell with such manly candour. Say what you will, I can trust your heart, after this moment."

They had crossed the river Ennerie, and were issuing from between its narrow ridge of hills, when Wallace, pointing to a stupendous rock which rose in solitary magnificence in the midst of a vast plain, exclaimed, "There is Dumbarton castle! — that citadel holds the fetters of

Scotland ; and if we break them there, every minor link will easily give way."

The men uttered a shout of anticipated triumph, at this sight. And proceeding, soon came in view of the fortifications, which helmeted the rock. As they approached, they discovered that it had two summits ; being in a manner cleft in twain ; the one side rising in a pyramidal form ; while the other, of a more level shape, sustained the ponderous buildings of the fortress.

It was dusk, when the little army arrived in the rear of a close thicket, which skirted the eastern dyke of the castle, and reached to an immense depth on the plain. On this spot, Wallace rested his men ; and while they placed themselves under its covert, till the appointed time of attack, he perceived through an opening in the wood, the gleaming of troops on the ramparts, and fires beginning to light on a lonely watch-tower, which crowned the pinnacle of the highest rock.

" Poor fools ! " exclaimed Murray : " like the rest of their brethren of clay, they look abroad for evils, and prepare not for those which are even at their doors ! "

" That beacon-fire," cried Scrymgeour, " shall light us to their chambers ; and for once we thank them for their providence."

" That beacon-fire," whispered Edwin to Wallace, " shall light me to honour ! To-night, by your agreement, I shall call *you, brother*, or lie dead on the summit of those walls ! "

" Edwin," said Wallace, " act as you say ; and deserve, not only to be called my brother, but to be the first banneret of freedom in arms ! "

He then turned towards the lines ; and giving his orders to each division, directed them to seek repose on the surrounding heather, till the now-glowing moon should have sunk her tell-tale light in the waves.

CHAPTER XXII.

DUMBARTON ROCK.

ALL obeyed the voice of their commander, and retired to rest. But the eyes of Edwin could not close ; his eager spirit was already on the walls of Dumbarton. His rapid mind anticipated the ascent of his general and his troop. But, an imagination no less just than ardent, suggested the difficulties attending so small a force assailing so formidable a garrison, without some immediate knowledge of its relative situations. A sudden thought struck him.—He would mount that rock alone ; he would seek to ascertain the place of Lord Mar's confinement ; that not one life in Wallace's faithful band, might be lost in a vague search.

“ Ah ! my general,” exclaimed he, “ Edwin shall be the first to spring those ramparts ! he shall tread that dangerous path alone ; and when he has thus proved himself not unworthy of thy confidence, he will return, to lead thee and thy soldiers to a sure victory ; and himself to honour by thy side !”

This fervent apostrophe, breathed to the night alone, was no sooner uttered, than he stole from the thicket, into which he had cast himself to repose. He looked towards the embattled cliff ; its summit stood bright in the moonlight, but deep shadows lay beneath. “ God be my speed !” cried he, and wrapping himself in his plaid, so mixed its dark hues with the weeds and herbage at the base of the rock, that he made its circuit without having attracted observation.

The south side seemed the most easy of ascent ; and by that he began his daring attempt. Having gained the height, he clambered behind a buttress ; the shadow of which cast the wall into such black obscurity, that he crept safely through one of its crenelles, and dropping gently inwards, alighted on his feet. Still keeping the shadowed side of the battlements, he proceeded cautiously along ; and

so stilly was his motion, that he passed undiscovered, even by the sentinels who guarded this quarter of the fortress.

He soon arrived at the open square before the citadel :— it was yet occupied by groups of Southron officers, gaily walking to and fro under the light of the moon. In hopes of gaining some useful information from their discourse, he concealed himself behind a chest of arrows ; and, as they passed backwards and forwards, distinctly heard them jesting each other about divers fair dames of the country around. The conversation terminated in a debate, whether or no the indifference which their governor De Valence manifested to the majestic beauties of the Countess of Mar were real or assumed. A thousand free remarks were made on the subject ; and Edwin gathered sufficient from the discourse, to understand that the Earl and Countess were treated severely, and confined in a large square tower in the cleft of the rock.

Having learnt all that he could expect from these officers, he speeded under the friendly shadow, towards the other side of the citadel ; and arrived just as the guard approached to relieve the sentinels of the northern postern.— He laid himself close to the ground, and happily overheard the word of the night, as it was given to the new watch.— This providential circumstance saved his life.

Finding no mode of regress from this place, but by the postern at which the sentinel was stationed ; or by attempting a passage through a small adjoining tower, the door of which stood open ; he considered a moment, and then deciding for the tower, stole unobserved into it. Fortunately no person was there ; but Edwin found it full of spare arms, with two or three vacant couches in different corners, where, he supposed, the officers on guard occasionally reposed ; several watch-cloaks lay on the floor. He readily apprehended the use he might make of this circumstance, and throwing one of them over his own shoulders, climbed to a large embrasure in the wall ; and forcing himself through it, dropped to a declivity on the other side, which shelved down to the cliff, wherein he now saw the square tower.

He had scarcely lit on firm ground, when a sentinel,

followed by two others with presented pikes, approached him, and demanded *the word*. — “*Montjoy!*” — was his reply. “Why leap the embrasure?” said one. “Why not enter by the postern?” demanded another. The conversation of the officers had given him a hint, on which he formed his answer. “Love, my brave comrades,” replied he, “seldom chooses even ways. I go on a message from a young ensign in the keep, to one of the Scottish damsels in yonder tower. Delay me, and his vengeance will fall upon us all.” — “Good luck to you, my lad!” was their answer; and, with a lightened step, he hastened towards the tower.

Not deeming it safe to seek an interview with any of the Earl's family, he crept along the base of the structure, and across the works, till he reached the high wall that blocks up egress from the north. He found this formidable curtain constructed of fragments of rock; and for the convenience of the guard, a sloping platform from within, led to the top of the wall. On the other side it was perpendicular. A solitary sentinel stood there; and how to pass him, was Edwin's next device. — To attack him, would be desperate: being one of a chain of guards around the interior of the fortress, his voice need only to be raised in the least, to call a regiment to his assistance, and Edwin must be seized on the instant.

Aware of his danger, but not dismayed, the adventurous youth bethought him of his former excuse; and remembering a flask of spirits which Ireland had put into his pouch on leaving Glenfinlass, he affected to be intoxicated, and staggering up to the man, accosted him in the character of a servant of the garrison.

The sentinel did not doubt the appearance of the boy; and Edwin holding out the flask, said that a pretty girl in the great tower had not only given him a long draught of the same good liquor, but had filled his bottle, that he might not lack amusement, while her companion, one of Lady Mar's maids-in-waiting, was tying up a true lover's knot to send to his master in the garrison. The man believed Edwin's tale, the more readily as he thrust the flask into his hand, and bade him drink: “Do not spare it,”

cried he ; “ the night is chilly, and I shall get more where that came from.”

The unsuspecting Southron returned him a merry reply, and putting the flask to his head, soon drained its contents. They had the effect Edwin desired. The soldier became flustered, and impatient of his duty. Edwin perceived it, and yawning, complained of drowsiness. “ I would go to the top of that wall, and sleep sweetly in the moon-beams,” said he, “ if any good-natured fellow would meanwhile wait for my pretty Scot !”

The half inebriated Southron liked no better sport ; and regardless of duty, he promised to draw nearer the tower, and bring from the fair messenger the expected token.

Having thus far gained his point, with an apparently staggering, but really agile step, Edwin ascended the wall. A leap from this dizzy height, was his only way to rejoin Wallace. To retread his steps through the fortress, in safety, would hardly be possible ; and besides, such a mode of retreat would leave him uninformed on the second object of his enterprise : to know the most vulnerable side of the fortress.

He threw himself along the summit of the wall, as if to sleep. He looked down, and saw nothing but the blackness of space : for here the broad expanse of shadow, rendered rocks and building of the same hue and level. But hope buoyed him in her arms ; and turning his eyes towards the sentinel, he observed him to have arrived within a few paces of the square tower. This was Edwin’s moment : grasping the projecting stone of the embattlement, he threw himself from its summit, and fell, a fearful depth, to the cliffs beneath.

Meanwhile, Wallace, having seen his brave followers depart to their repose, reclined himself along a pile of moss-grown stones, which, in the days of the renowned Fingal, had covered the body of some valiant Morven chieftain. He fixed his wakeful eyes on the castle, now illumined in every part by the fulness of the moon’s lustre ; and considered which point would be most assailable by the scaling ladders he had prepared. Every side seemed a precipice. The Leven, surrounding it on the north, and the west : the

Clyde, broad as a sea, on the south. — The only place that seemed at all accessible, was the side next the dyke behind which he lay. Here the ascent to the castellated part of the rock, because most perpendicular, was the least guarded with outworks: and by this he determined to make the attempt, as soon as the setting moon should involve the garrison in darkness.

While he yet mused on what might be the momentous consequences of the succeeding midnight hours, he thought he heard a swift though cautious footstep. He raised himself, and laying his hand on his sword, saw a figure advancing towards him.

“Who goes there?” demanded Wallace.

“A faithful Scot,” was the reply.

Wallace recognised the voice of Edwin. — “What has disturbed you? Why do you not take rest with the others?”

“That we may have the surer, to-morrow!” replied the youth: “I am just returned from the summit of yonder rock.”

“How!” interrupted Wallace: “Have you scaled it alone, and are returned in safety?”

Wallace caught him in his arms: “Intrepid, glorious boy! tell me for what purpose, did you thus hazard your precious life?”

“I wished to learn its most pregnable part,” replied Edwin, his young heart beating with triumph at these encomiums from his commander; “and particularly where the good Earl is confined, that we might make our attack directly to the point.”

“And have you been successful?” demanded Wallace.

“I have,” was his answer. “Lord Mar, and his lady, are kept in a square tower, which stands in the cleft between the two summits of the rock. It is not only surrounded by embattled walls, which flank the ponderous buttresses of this huge dungeon; but the space on which it stands is bulwarked, at each end, by a stone curtain of fifteen feet high, guarded by turrets full of armed men.”

“And yet by that side, you suppose we must ascend?” said Wallace.

“Certainly: for if you attempt it on the west, we should

have to scale the watch-tower cliff, and the ascent could only be gained in file. An auxiliary detachment, to attack in flank, might succeed there; but the passage being so narrow, would be too tedious for the whole party to arrive in time. — Should we take the south, we must cut through the whole garrison, before we could reach the Earl. And on this side, the morass lies too near the foot of the rock, to admit an approach without the greatest danger. But on the north, where I descended; by wading through part of the Leven, and climbing from cliff to cliff, I have every hope you may succeed.”

Edwin recounted the particulars of his progress through the fortress; and by the minuteness of his topographical descriptions, enforced his arguments for the north to be the point assailed. Closing his narrative, he explained to the anxious enquiry of Wallace, how he had escaped accident in a leap of so many feet. The wall was covered with ivy; he caught by its branches in his descent, and at last happily fell amongst a thick bed of furze. After this, he clambered down the steep; and fording the Leven (there only knee deep), now appeared before his general, elate in heart, and bright in valour.

“The intrepidity of this action,” returned Wallace, glowing with admiration at so noble a daring in so young a creature, “merits, that every confidence should be placed in the result of your observations. Your safe return is a pledge of our design being approved. And when we go in the strength of Heaven, who can doubt the issue! This night, when the Lord of battles puts that fortress into our hands, before the whole of our little army, you shall receive that knighthood you have so richly deserved. Such, my truly dear brother, my noble Edwin, shall be the reward of your virtue, and your toil!”

Wallace would now have sent him to repose himself; but animated by the success of his adventure, and exulting in the honour, which was so soon to stamp a sign of this exploit upon him for ever; he told his leader, that he felt no want of sleep, and would rather take on him the office of arousing the other captains to their stations; the moon, their preconcerted signal, being then approaching its rest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FORTRESS.

KIRKPATRICK, Murray, and Scrymgeour, hastened to their commander ; and in a few minutes all were under arms.—Wallace briefly explained his altered plan of assault ; and marshalling the men accordingly, led them in silence through the water, and along the beach, which lay between the rock and the Leven. Arriving at the base just as the moon set, they began to ascend. To do this in the dark, redoubled the difficulty ; but as Wallace had the place of every accessible stone accurately described to him by Edwin, he went confidently forward, followed by his Lanarkmen.

He and they, being the first to mount, fixed and held the tops of the scaling ladders, while Kirkpatrick and Scrymgeour, with their men, gradually ascended, and gained the bottom of the wall. Here, planting themselves in the crannies of the rock, under the impenetrable darkness of the night (for the moon had not only set, but the stars were obscured by clouds) they awaited the signal of attack.

Meanwhile, Edwin led Lord Andrew with his followers, and the Fraser men, round by the western side, to mount the watch-tower rock, and seize the few soldiers who kept the beacon. As a signal of having succeeded, they were to smother the flame on the top of the tower, and thence descend towards the garrison, to meet Wallace before the prison of the Earl of Mar.

While the men of Lanark, with their eyes fixed on the burning beacon, in deadly stillness watched the appointed signal for the attack, Wallace, by the aid of his dagger, which he struck into the firm soil that occupied the cracks in the rock, drew himself up, almost parallel with the top of the great wall, which clasped the bases of the two hills. He listened ; not a voice was to be heard in the garrison, of all the legions he had so lately seen glittering on its battlements. It was an awful pause.

Now was the moment, when Scotland was to make her first essay for freedom ! Should it fail, ten thousand bolts of iron would be added to her chains ! Should it succeed, liberty and happiness were the almost certain consequences.

He looked up ; and fixing his eyes on the beacon-flame, thought he saw the figures of men pass before it—the next moment all was darkness—he sprung on the wall ; and feeling, by the touch of hands about his feet, that his brave followers had already mounted their ladders, he grasped his sword firmly, and leaped down on the ground within. In that moment, he struck against the sentinel, who was just passing, and by the violence of the shock struck him to the earth ; but the man, as he fell, catching Wallace round the waist, dragged him after him, and, with a vociferous cry, shouted, *Treason !*

Several sentinels ran with levelled pikes to the spot ; the adjacent turrets emptied themselves of their armed inhabitants ; and all assaulted Wallace, just as he had extricated himself from the grasp of the prostrate soldier.

“ Who are you ? ” demanded they.

“ Your enemy,” and two fell at his feet with one stroke of his sword.

“ Alarm !—Treason ! ” resounded from the rest, as they aimed their random strokes at the conquering chief. But he was now assisted by the vigorous arm of Ker, and of several Lanarkmen ; who, having cleared the wall, were dealing about blows in the darkness, which filled the air with groans, and strewed the ground with the dying and the dead.

One or two Southrons, whose courage was not equal to their caution, fled to arouse the garrison ; and just as the whole of Wallace’s men leaped the wall, and rallied to his support, the inner ballium gate burst open, and a legion of foes, bearing torches, issued to the contest.—With horrible threatenings, they came on ; and by a rapid movement, surrounded Wallace and his little company.—But his soul brightened in danger ; and his men, warmed with the same spirit, stood firm with fixed pikes, receiving without injury, the assault. Their weapons being longer than the enemy’s, the Southrons, not aware of the circumstance,

rushed upon their points, incurring the death they meant to give. Seeing their disorder, Wallace ordered the pikes to be dropped, and his men to charge sword in hand. Terrible was now the havoc ; for the desperate Scots, grappling each to his foe with a fatal hold, let not go till the piercing shriek, or the agonised groan, convinced him that death had seized its victim. Wallace fought in front, making a dreadful passage through the falling ranks ; while the tremendous sweep of his sword, flashing in the intermitting light, warned the survivors where the avenging blade would next descend. A horrid vacuity was made in the lately thronged spot : — it seemed not the slaughter of a mortal arm, but as if the destroying angel himself were there ; and with one blast of his desolating brand, had laid all in ruin. The platform was cleared ; and the fallen torches, some half extinguished, and others flaming on the ground by the sides of the dead, showed, in their uncertain gleams, a few terrified wretches seeking safety in flight. The same lurid rays, casting a transitory light on the iron gratings of the great tower, informed Wallace that the heat of conflict had drawn him to the prison of the Earl.

“ We are now near the end of this night’s work ! ” cried he : “ Let us press forward, to give freedom to the Earl of Mar ! ”

“ Liberty, and Lord Mar ! ” cried Kirkpatrick, rushing onwards. He was immediately followed by his own men ; but not quick enough for his daring. The guard in the tower, hearing the outcry, issued from the flanking gates, and, surrounding him, took him prisoner.

“ If there be might in your arms, ” roared he with the voice of a lion, “ men of Loch Doine, rescue your leader ! ”

They hurried forward, with yells of defiance : but the strength of the garrison, awakened by the flying wretches from the defeat, turned out all its power ; and, with De Valence at their head, pouring on Kirkpatrick’s men, would have overpowered them, had not Wallace, and his sixty heroes, with desperate determination, cut a passage to them, through the closing ranks.

Pikes struck against corslets, swords rung on helmets; and the ponderous battle-axe, falling with the weight of fate, cleft the uplifted target in twain. Blood spouted on every side; and the dripping hands of Kirkpatrick, as Wallace tore him from the enemy, proclaimed that he had bathed his vengeance in the stream. On being released, he shook his ensanguined arms, and burst into a horrid laugh: "The work speeds!—Now through the heart of the governor!"

Even while he spoke, Wallace lost him again from his side: and again, by the shouts of the Southrons, who cried, "No quarter for the fiend!" he learnt he must be retaken. That merciless cry was the death-bell of their own doom. It directed Wallace to the spot; and, throwing himself, and his brethren of Lanark, into the midst of the band which held the chief, Kirkpatrick was again rescued. But thousands seemed now to surround Wallace's self. To do this generous deed, he had advanced farther than he ought; and himself and his brave followers, must have been slain, had he not fallen back; and covering their rear with the great tower, all who had the hardihood to approach, fell under the weight of the Scottish claymore.

Scrymgeour, at the head of the Loch Doine men, in vain attempted to reach his contending party; and fearful of losing the royal standard, he was turning to make a valiant retreat, when Murray and Edwin (having disengaged their followers from the precipices of the beacon rock) rushed into the midst, striking their shields, and uttering the inspiring *slogen* of "Wallace and Freedom!" It was re-echoed by every Scot: those that were flying, returned; they who sustained the conflict, hailed the cry with braced sinews; and the terrible thunder of the word, pealing from rank to rank, struck a terror into De Valence's men, which made them pause.

On that short moment, turned the crisis of their fate. Wallace cut his way through the dismayed Southrons; who, hearing the reiterated shouts of the fresh reinforcement, knew not whether its strength might not be thousands instead of hundreds, and panic-struck they became an easy prey to their enemies. Surrounded, mixed with their as-

sailants, they knew not friends from foes ; and each individual being bent on flight, they indiscriminately cut to right and left, wounding as many of their own men, as of the Scots ; and finally, after slaughtering half their companions, some few escaped through the small posterns of the garrison ; leaving the inner ballia entirely in possession of the foe.

The whole of the field being cleared, Wallace ordered the tower to be forced. A strong guard was still within ; and, as the assailants drew near, every means were used to render their assaults abortive. As the Scots pressed to the main entrance, stones and heavy metals were thrown upon their heads ; but not in the least intimidated, they stood beneath the iron shower, till Wallace ordered them to drive a large felled tree, which lay on the ground, against the hinges of the door : it burst open, and the whole party rushed into the hall.

A short, sanguinary, but decisive conflict took place. The hauberk and plaid of Wallace were dyed from head to foot : his own brave blood, and the ferocious stream from his enemies, mingled in one horrid hue upon his garments.

“ Wallace ! Wallace ! ” cried the stentorian lungs of Kirkpatrick. In a moment Wallace was at his side, and found him struggling with two men. The light of a single lamp, suspended from the rafters, fell direct upon the combatants. A dagger was pointed at the life of the old knight ; but Wallace laid the holder of it dead across the body of his intended victim ; and catching the other assailant by the throat, threw him prostrate to the ground.

“ Spare me, for the honour of knighthood ! ” cried the conquered.

“ For my honour, you shall die ! ” cried Kirkpatrick. His sword was already at the heart of the Englishman. Wallace beat it back. “ Kirkpatrick, he is my prisoner, and I give him life.”

“ You know not what you do,” cried the old knight, struggling with Wallace, to release his sword arm : “ This is De Valence ! ” — “ Quarter ! ” reiterated the panting, and hard-pressed Earl ! “ and by the holy cross, Scotland shall

never see me more! Noble Wallace, my life!—For I am wounded.”

“Sooner take my own!” cried the determined Kirkpatrick, fixing his foot on the neck of the prostrate man, and trying to wrench his hand from the grasp of his commander.

“Shame!” cried Wallace: “you must strike through my heart, to kill any wounded man I hear cry for quarter! Release the Earl, on his word, and for your own honour.”

“Our safety lies in his destruction!” cried Kirkpatrick; and enraged at opposition, he thrust his commander (little expecting such an action), from off the body of the Earl.—De Valence seized his advantage, and catching Kirkpatrick by the limb that pressed on him, overthrew him; and by a sudden spring, turning quickly on Wallace, struck his dagger into his side. All this was done in an instant. Wallace did not fall; but staggering, with the weapon sticking in the wound, he was so surprised by the baseness of the deed, he could not give the alarm, till its perpetrator had disappeared.

The flying Earl took his course through a narrow passage between the works; and proceeding swiftly towards the south, issued safely at one of the outer ballium gates; that part of the castle being now solitary, all the men having been drawn from the walls to the contest within; and thence he made his escape in a fisher’s boat across the Clyde.

Meanwhile, Wallace having recovered himself, just as the Scots brought in lighted torches from the lower apartments of the tower, saw Sir Roger Kirkpatrick leaning sternly on his blood-dripping sword, and the young Edwin, coming forward in garments too nearly the hue of his own. Andrew Murray stood already by his side. Wallace’s hand was upon the hilt of the dagger, which the ungrateful De Valence had left in his breast.—“You are wounded! you are slain!” cried Murray, in a voice of consternation. Edwin stood motionless with horror.

“That dagger!” exclaimed Scrymgeour,—

“Has done nothing,” replied Wallace, “but let me a little more blood.” As he spoke, he drew it out, and

thrusting the corner of his scarf into his bosom, stanchèd the wound.

“So is your mercy rewarded,” exclaimed Kirkpatrick.

“So am I true to a soldier’s duty,” returned Wallace, “though De Valence is a traitor to his!”

“You treated him as a man,” replied Kirkpatrick; “but now you find him a treacherous fiend!”

“Your eagerness, my brave friend,” returned Wallace, “has lost him as a prisoner. If not for humanity, or honour, for policy’s sake, we ought to have spared his life; and detained him an hostage for our own countrymen in England.”

Kirkpatrick remembered how his violence had released the Earl, and he looked down abashed. Wallace, perceiving it, continued—“But let us not abuse our time, discoursing on a coward. He is gone; the fortress is ours; and our first measure must be to guard it from surprise.”

As he spoke, his eyes fell upon Edwin; who, having recovered from the shock of Murray’s exclamation, had brought forward the surgeon of their little band. A few minutes bound up the wounds of their chief; even while beckoning the anxious boy towards him. “Brave youth,” cried he, “you, who at the imminent risk of your own life, explored these heights, that you might render our ascent more sure; you, who have fought like a young lion, in this unequal contest; here, in the face of all your valiant comrades, receive that knighthood, which rather derives lustre from your virtues, than gives additional consequence to your name.”

With a bounding heart, Edwin bent his knee: and Wallace, giving him the hallowed accolade*, the young knight rose from his position, with all the roses of his springing fame glowing in his countenance. Scrymgeour presented him the knightly girdle†, which he unbraced from his own loins; and while the happy boy received the sword to which it was attached, he exclaimed with ani-

* Accolade, the three strokes of the sword given in knighting.

† It was the custom in Scotland on investing a knight, to present him along with the sword and consecrated spurs, a girdle of the same sanctity.

mation: "While I follow the example before my eyes, I shall never draw this in an unjust cause, nor ever sheath it in a just one."

"Go then," returned Wallace, smiling his approval of this sentiment, "while work is to be done, I will keep my knight to the toil; go, and with twenty men of Lanark, guard the wall by which we ascended."

Edwin disappeared, and Wallace, having despatched detachments to occupy other parts of the garrison, took a torch in his hand, and turning to Murray, proposed seeking the Earl of Mar. Lord Andrew was soon at the iron door, which led from the hall to the principal stairs.

"We must have our friendly battering ram here," cried he; "a close prisoner do they indeed keep my uncle, when even the inner doors are bolted on him!"

The men dragged the tree forward, and striking it with all their strength against the iron, it burst open with the noise of thunder. Shrieks from within, followed the sound. The women of Lady Mar, not knowing what to suppose during the uproar of the conflict, now hearing the door forced, expected nothing less than that some new enemies were advancing; and, giving themselves up to despair, they flew into the room where the Countess sat in equal though less clamorous terror.

At the shouts of the Scots, when they began the attack, the Earl had started from his couch.—"That is not peace!" said he; "there is some surprise!"

"Alas, from whom?" returned Lady Mar; "who would venture to attack a fortress like this, garrisoned with thousands?"

The cry was repeated.

"It is the slogan of Sir William Wallace!" cried he; "I shall be free! O, for a sword!—Hear! hear!"

As the shouts redoubled, and, mingled with the various clangors of battle, drew nearer the tower, the impatience of the Earl could not be restrained. Hope and eagerness seemed to have dried up his wounds, and new-strung every nerve, while, unarmed as he was, he rushed from the apartment, and hurried down the stairs which led to the iron door. He found it so firmly fastened by bars

and padlocks, he could not move it. Again he ascended to his terrified wife ; who, conscious how little obligation Wallace owed to her, perhaps dreaded even more to see her husband's hopes realised, than to find herself yet more rigidly the prisoner of the haughty De Valence.

“ Joanna ! ” cried he, “ the arm of God is with us. — My prayers are heard ; Scotland will yet be free. Hear those groans, — those shouts. — Victory ! Victory ! ”

As he thus echoed the cry of triumph, uttered by the Scots when bursting open the outer gate of the tower, the foundations of the building shook, and Lady Mar, almost insensible with terror, received the exhausted body of her husband into her arms ; he fainted from the transport his weakened frame was unable to bear. At this instant, the panic-struck women, ran shrieking into the room to their mistress.

The Countess could not speak, but sat pale and motionless, supporting his head on her bosom. Guided by the noise, Lord Andrew flew into the room, and rushing towards his uncle, fell at his feet. “ Liberty ! Liberty ! ” was all he could say. His words pierced the ear of the Earl, like a voice from Heaven ; and looking up, without a word, he threw his arms round the neck of his nephew.

Tears relieved the contending feelings of the Countess ; and the women, recognising the young Lord of Bothwell, retired into a distant corner, well assured they had now no cause for fear.

The Earl rested but a moment on the panting breast of his nephew ; when, looking up to seek the mighty leader of the band, he saw Wallace enter, with the step of security, and triumph in his eyes.

“ Ever my deliverer ! ” cried the venerable Mar, stretching forth his arms. The next moment he held Wallace to his breast ; and remembering all that he had lost for his sake since they parted, a soldier's heart melted, and he burst into tears. — “ Wallace, my preserver ; thou victim for Scotland, and for me ; — or rather, thou chosen of Heaven ! who, by the sacrifice of all thou didst hold dear on earth, art made a blessing to thy country ! — receive my thanks and my heart.”

Wallace felt all, in his soul, which the Earl meant to imply ; but recovering the calmed tone of his mind, before he was released from the embrace of his friend ; when he raised himself, and replied to the acknowledgments of the Countess, it was with a serene, though glowing countenance.

She, when she had glanced from the eager entrance and action of her nephew, to the advancing hero, looked as Venus did when she beheld the God of War rise from a field of blood. She started at the appearance of Wallace ; but it was not his garments dropping gore, nor the blood-stained falchion in his hand, that caused the new sensation ; it was the figure breathing youth and manhood ; it was the face, where every noble passion of the heart had stamped themselves on his perfect features ; it was his air, where majesty, and sweet entrancing grace, mingled in lovely union. They were all these, that struck at once upon the sight of Lady Mar, and made her exclaim within herself, " This is a God ! This is the hero, that is to humble Edward ; — that is to bless, — whom ? " was her thought. " Oh, no woman ! Let him be a creature enshrined and holy, for no female heart to dare to love ! "

This passed through the mind of the Countess, in less time than it has been repeated ; and when she saw him clasped in her husband's arms, she exclaimed to herself, " Helen, thou wert right ; thy gratitude was prophetic of a matchless object ; while I, wretch that I am, even whispered the wish to my traitress heart, while I gave information against my husband, that this man, the cause of all, might be secured or slain ! "

Just as the last idea struck her, Wallace rose from the embrace of his venerable friend, and met the riveted eye of the Countess. She stammered forth a few expressions of obligation ; he attributed her confusion to the surprise of the moment, and replying to her respectfully, turned again to the Earl.

The joy of the venerable chief was unbounded, when he found that a handful of Scots had put two thousand Southrons to flight, and gained entire possession of the castle. Wallace, having satisfied the anxious questions of

his noble auditor, gladly perceived the morning light. He rose from his seat. "I shall take a temporary leave of you, my Lord," said he to the Earl: "I must now visit my brave comrades at their posts; and see the colours of Scotland planted on the citadel."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GREAT TOWER.

WHEN Wallace withdrew, Lady Mar, who had detained Murray, whispered to him, while a blush stained her cheek, that she should like to be present at the planting of the standard. Lord Mar declared his willingness to accompany her to the spot, and added; "I can be supported thither by the arm of Andrew." Murray hesitated. "It will be impossible for my aunt to go; the hall below, and the ground before the tower, are covered with slain."

"Let them be cleared away!" cried she; "for I cannot consent to be deprived of a spectacle so honourable to my country."

Murray regarded the pitiless indifference with which she gave this order, with amazement: "To do that, madam," said he, "is beyond my power; the whole ceremony of the colours would be completed, long before I could clear the earth of half its bleeding load. I will seek a passage for you, by some other way."

Before the Earl could make a remark, Murray had disappeared; and after exploring the lower part of the tower in unavailing search for a way, he met Sir Roger Kirkpatrick issuing from a small door; which, being in shadow, he had hitherto overlooked. It led through the ballium, to the platform before the citadel. Lord Andrew returned to his uncle and aunt, and informing them of this discovery, gave his arm to Lord Mar, while Kirkpatrick led forward the agitated Countess. At this moment, the sun rose behind the purple summit of Ben Lomond.

When they approached the citadel, Wallace and Sir Alexander Scrymgeour had just gained its summit. The standard of Edward was yet flying. Wallace looked at it for a moment; then laying his hand on the staff, "Down, thou red dragon," cried he, "and learn to bow before the Giver of all victory!" Even while speaking, he rent it from the roof; and casting it over the battlements, planted the Lion of Scotland in its stead.

As the vast evolvments floated on the air, the cry of triumph, the loud clarion of honest triumph, burst from every heart, horn, and trumpet below. It was a shout, that pierced the skies; and entered the soul of Wallace, with a bliss, which seemed a promise of immortality.

"O God!" cried he, still grasping the staff, and looking up to heaven; "we got not this in possession, through our own might; but thy right hand, and the light of thy countenance, overthrew the enemy! Thine the conquest, thine the glory!"

"And thus we consecrate the day to thee, Power of Heaven!" rejoined Scrymgeour: "Let this standard be thine own; and whithersoever we bear it, the result will be victory!"

Wallace, feeling as if no eye looked on them but that of Heaven, dropped on his knee, in token that he subscribed to the vow; and rising again, took Sir Alexander by the hand: "My brave friend," said he, "we have here planted the tree of freedom in Scotland. Should I die in its defence, swear to bury me under its branches; swear that no enslaved ground shall cover my remains."

"I swear," cried Scrymgeour, laying his crossed hands upon the arm of Wallace; "I swear with a double vow: by the blood of my brave ancestors, whose valour gave me the name I bear; by the cross of Saint Andrew; and by your valiant self; never to sheath my sword, while I have life in my body, until Scotland be free!"

The colours fixed, Wallace and his brave colleague descended the tower; and perceiving the Earl and Countess, who sat on a stone bench at the end of the platform, approached them. The Countess rose, as the chiefs drew near. Lord Mar caught his friend by the hand, with a

gratulation in his eyes, that was unutterable: his lady spoke, hardly conscious of what she said; and Wallace, after a few minutes' discourse, proposed to the Earl to retire with Lady Mar into the citadel; where she would be more suitably lodged, than in their late prison. Lord Mar was obeying this movement, when suddenly stopping, he exclaimed, — "But where is that wondrous boy, — your pilot over these perilous rocks? — let me give him a soldier's thanks."

Happy at so grateful a demand, Wallace beckoned Edwin; who, just relieved from his guard, was standing at some distance. "Here," said he, "is my knight of fifteen! for last night he proved himself more worthy of his spurs, than many a man who has received them from a king."

"He shall wear those of a king," rejoined the Lord Mar, unbuckling from his feet a pair of golden spurs; — "these were fastened on my heels by our great King Alexander, at the battle of Largs. I had intended them for my only son; but the first knight in the cause of rescued Scotland, is the son of my heart and soul!"

As he spoke, he would have pressed the young hero to his breast; but Edwin, trembling with emotion, slid down upon his knees, and clasping the Earl's hand, said in a hardly audible voice — "Receive, and pardon, the truant son of your sister Ruthven!"

"What!" exclaimed the veteran, "is it Edwin Ruthven, that has brought me this weight of honour? — Come to my arms, thou dearest child of my dearest Janet!"

The uncle and nephew were folded in each other's embrace. Lady Mar wept; and Wallace, unable to bear the remembrances which such a scene pressed upon his heart, turned away towards the battlements. Edwin murmured a short explanation in the ear of his uncle; and then rising from his arms, with his beautiful face glittering like an April day in tears, allowed his gay cousin Murray to buckle the royal spurs on his feet. The rite over, he kissed Lord Andrew's hand, in token of acknowledgment; and called on Sir William Wallace, to bless the new honours conferred on his knight.

Wallace turned towards Edwin, with a smile which par-

took more of heaven than earth; "Have we not performed our mutual promises?" said he: "I brought you to the spot, where you were to reveal your name; and you have declared it to me by the voice of glory! — Come, then, my brother, let us leave your uncle awhile, to seek his repose."

As he spoke, he bowed to the Countess; and Edwin joyfully receiving his arm, they walked together towards the eastern postern.

Agitated with the delightful surprise of thus meeting his favourite sister's son (whom he had never seen since his infancy), and exhausted by the variety of his late emotions, the Earl readily acquiesced in a proposal for rest, and leaning on Lord Andrew, proceeded to the citadel.

The Countess had other attractions: lingering at the side of the rough knight of Torthorald, she looked back; and when she saw the object of her gaze disappear through the gates, she sighed; and turning to her conductor, walked by him in silence, till they joined her husband in the hall of the keep. — Murray led the way into the apartments lately occupied by De Valence. They were furnished with all the luxury of a Southron nobleman. Lady Mar cast her eyes around the splendid chamber, and seated herself on one of its tapestried couches. The Earl, not marking whether it were silk or rushes, placed himself beside her. Murray drew a stool towards them, while Kirkpatrick, tired of his gallant duty, abruptly took his leave.

"My dear Andrew," said the Earl, "in the midst of this proud rejoicing, there is yet a canker at my heart. Tell me that when my beloved Helen disappeared in the tumult at Bothwell, she was under your protection?"

"She was," replied Murray; "and I thank the holy Saint Fillan, she is now in the sanctuary of his church."

Murray then recounted to his relieved uncle, every event, from the moment of his withdrawing behind the arras, to that of his confiding the English soldier, with the iron box, to the care of the prior. Lord Mar sighed heavily, when he spoke of that mysterious casket. "Whatever it contain," said he, "it has drawn after it much evil and much good. The domestic peace of Wallace was

ruined by it ; and the spirit which now restores Scotland to herself, was raised by his wrongs !”

“ But tell me,” added he, “ do you think my daughter safe, so near a garrison of the enemy ?”

“ Surely, my Lord,” cried the Countess, too well remembering the enthusiasm with which Helen had regarded, even the unknown Wallace ; “ surely you would not bring that tender child into a scene like this ! Rather send a messenger to convey her secretly to Thirlestane : at that distance she will be safe, and be under the protection of her grandfather.”

The Earl acquiesced in her opinion : and saying he would consult with Wallace, about the securest mode of travel for his daughter ; again turned to Lord Andrew, to learn farther of their late proceedings. But the Countess, uneasy at this determination, once more interrupted him.

“ Alas ! my Lord, what would you do ? His generous zeal will offer to go in person for your daughter. We know not what dangers he might then incur ; and surely the champion of Scotland, is not to be thrown into peril for any domestic concern ! — If you really feel the weight of the evils into which you have plunged Sir William Wallace, do not increase it, by even hinting to him the present subject of your anxiety.”

“ My aunt is an oracle !” resumed Murray. “ Allow me to be the happy knight, that is to bear the surrender of Dumbarton to my sweet cousin ? Prevail on Wallace to remain in this garrison till I return ; and then full tilt for the walls of old Stirling, and the downfall of Hughie Cressingham !”

Both the Countess and the Earl were pleased with this arrangement. The latter, by the persuasions of his nephew, retired into an inner chamber to repose ; and the former desired Lord Andrew to inform Wallace, that she should expect to be honoured with his presence at noon, to partake of such fare as the garrison afforded.

On Murray’s coming from the citadel, he learnt that Wallace was gone towards the great tower. He followed him thither ; and on issuing from the postern which led to

that part of the rock, saw the chief standing, with his helmet off, in the midst of the slain.

“ This is a sorry sight ! ” said he to Murray, as he approached ; “ but it shall not long lie thus exposed. — I have just ordered that these sad wrecks of human nature, may be lowered into the Clyde : its rushing stream will soon carry them to a quiet grave, beneath yon peaceful sea.” His own dead, amounting to no more than fifteen, were to be buried at the foot of the rock : a prisoner in the castle, having described steps in the cliff, by which the solemnity could easily be performed.

“ But why, my dear commander,” cried Lord Andrew, “ why do you take any thought about our enemies ? Leave them where they are, and the eagles of our mountains will soon find them graves.”

“ For shame, Murray ! ” was the reply of Wallace ; “ they are dead, and our enemies no more. — They are men like ourselves ; and shall we deny them a place in that earth, whence we all sprung ? We war not with human nature : are we not rather the assertors of her rights ? ”

“ I know,” replied Lord Andrew, blushing ; “ that I am often the assertor of my own folly ; and I do not know how you will forgive my inconsiderate impertinence.”

“ Because it was inconsiderate ! ” replied Wallace : “ Inhumanity is too stern a guest to live in such a breast as yours.”

“ If I ever give her quarters,” replied Murray, “ I should most woefully disgrace the companion she would meet there. Next to the honour of fair Scotland, my cousin Helen is the goddess of my idolatry ; and she would forswear my love and kindred, could she believe me capable of feeling otherwise than in unison with Sir William Wallace.”

Wallace looked towards him with a benign pleasure in his countenance : — “ Your fair cousin does me honour ! ”

“ Ah ! my noble friend,” cried Murray, lowering his gay tone, to one of softer expression ; “ if you knew all the goodness ; all the nobleness, that dwells in her gentle heart, you would indeed esteem her — you would love her as I do.”

The blood fled from the cheek of Wallace. "Not as you do, Murray:—I can no more love woman as you love her. Such scenes as these," cried he, turning to the mangled bodies, which the men were now carrying away to the precipice of the Clyde, "have divorced woman's love from my heart.—I am all my country's, or I am nothing."

"Nothing!" reiterated Murray, laying his hand upon that of Wallace, as it rested upon the hilt of the sword on which he leaned: "Is the friend of mankind, the champion of Scotland, the beloved of a thousand valuable hearts, nothing? Nay, art thou not the agent of Heaven, to be the scourge of a tyrant? Art thou not the deliverer of thy country?"

Wallace turned his bright eye upon Murray, with an expression of mingled feelings:—"May I be all this, my friend, and Wallace must yet be happy!—But speak not to me of love, and woman: tell me not of those endearing qualities, I have prized too tenderly; and which are now buried to me for ever, beneath the ashes of Ellerslie."

"Not under the ashes of Ellerslie," cried Murray, "sleep the remains of your lovely wife." Wallace's penetrating eye turned quick upon him; Murray continued: "My cousin's pitying soul stretched itself towards them; by her directions they were brought from your oratory in the rock, and deposited, with all holy rites, in the cemetery at Bothwell."

The glow that now animated the before chilled heart of Wallace, overspread his face. His eyes spoke volumes of gratitude, his lips moved, but his feelings were too big for utterance, and, fervently pressing the hand of Murray,—to conceal emotions ready to shake his manhood, he turned away, and walked towards the cliff.

When all the slain were lowered to their last beds, a young priest, who came in the company of Scrymgeour, gave the funeral benediction, both to the departed, in the waves, and those whom the shore had received. The rites over, Murray again drew near to Wallace, and delivered his aunt's message. "I shall obey her commands," returned he; "but first we must visit our wounded prisoners in the tower."

Above three hundred of them had been discovered amongst the dead.

Murray gladly obeyed the impulse of his leader's arm ; and, followed by the chieftains returned from the late solemn duty, they entered the tower. Ireland welcomed Wallace with the intelligence, that he hoped he had succoured friends instead of foes ; for that most of the prisoners were poor Welsh peasants, whom Edward had torn from their mountains, to serve in his legions ; and a few Irish, who in heat of blood, and eagerness for adventure, had enlisted in his ranks. " I have shown to them," continued Ireland, " what fools they are, to injure themselves in us. I told the Welsh, they were clinching their own chains, by assisting to extend the dominion of their conqueror : and I have convinced the Irish, they were forging fetters for themselves, by lending their help to enslave their brother nation, the free-born Scots. They only require your presence, my Lord, to forswear their former leaders, and to enlist under Scottish banners."

" Thou art an able orator, my good Stephen," returned Wallace ; " and whatever promises thou hast made to honest men, in the name of Scotland, we are ready to ratify them. Is it not so ?" added he, turning to Kirkpatrick and Scrymgeour.

" All, as you will," replied they in one voice. " Yes ;" added Kirkpatrick ; " you were the first to rise for Scotland ; and who but you has a right to command for her !"

Ireland threw open the door, which led into the hall ; and there, on the ground, on pallets of straw, lay most of the wounded Southrons. Some of their dimmed eyes, had discerned their preserver, when he discovered them expiring on the rock ; and on sight of him now, they uttered such a piercing cry of gratitude, that, surprised, he stood for a moment. In that moment, five or six of the poor wounded wretches crawled to his feet : — " Our enemy ! — Our preserver !" burst from their lips, as they kissed the hem of his garment.

" Not to me, not to me," exclaimed Wallace ; " I am a soldier like yourselves ! I have only acted a soldier's part : — but I am a soldier of freedom ; you, of a tyrant,

who seeks to enslave the world ! This makes the difference between us ; this lays you at my feet ; when I would more willingly receive you to my arms as brothers in one generous cause."

"We are yours," was the answering exclamation of those who knelt, and of those who raised their feeble voices from their beds of straw. A few only, remained silent. With many kind expressions of acceptance, Wallace disengaged himself from those who clung around him ; and then moved towards the sick, who seemed too ill to speak. While repeating the same consolatory language to them, he particularly observed an old man, who was lying between two young ones, and still kept a profound silence. His rough features were marked with many a scar ; but there was a meek resignation in his face, that powerfully struck Wallace. When the chief drew near, the veteran raised himself on his arm, and bowed his head with a respectful air. Wallace stopped. "You are an Englishman?"

"I am, sir, and I have no services to offer you. These two young men on each side of me, are my sons. Their brother I lost last night in the conflict. To-day, by your mercy, not only my life is preserved, but my two remaining children also !—Yet I am an Englishman ; and I cannot be grateful, at the expense of my allegiance."

"Nor would I require it of you," returned Wallace ; "these brave Welsh, and Irish, were brought hither by the invader who subjugates their countries ; they owe him no duty. But you are a free subject of England ; he that is a tyrant over others, can only be a king to you : he must be the guardian of your laws, the defender of your liberties, or his sceptre falls. Having sworn to follow a sovereign so plighted, I am not severe enough to condemn you, because, misled by that phantom which he calls glory, you have suffered him to betray you into unjust conquests."

"Once I have been so misled," returned the old man ; "but I never will again. Fifty years I have fought under the British standard, in Normandy and in Palestine ; and now in my old age, with four sons, I followed the armies of my sovereign into Scotland. My eldest, I lost in the

plains of Dunbar. My second, fell last night ; and my two youngest are now by my side. You have saved them and me. What can I do? Not, as your noble self, says, forswear my country : but this I swear ; and in the oath do you, my sons, join (as he spoke, they laid their crossed hands upon his, in token of assent) ; never to raise our swords against England ; and, with like faith, never to lift an arm against Sir William Wallace, or the cause of injured Scotland !”

“ To this we also subjoin !” cried several other men, who comprised the whole of the English prisoners.

“ Noble people !” cried Wallace, “ why have you not a king worthy of you !”

“ And yet,” observed Kirkpatrick, in a surly tone, “ Heselrigge was one of these people !” Wallace turned upon him, with a look of so tremendous a meaning, that, awed by an expression too mighty for him to comprehend, he fell back a few paces, muttering curses ; but on whom could not be heard.

“ That man would arouse the tiger, in our lion-hearted chief !” whispered Scrymgeour to Murray.

“ Ay,” returned Lord Andrew ; “ but the royal spirit, keeps the beast in awe :—see how coweringly that bold brow now bows before it !”

Wallace marked the impression his glance had made ; but where he had struck, being unwilling to pierce also, he dispelled the thunder from his countenance, and once more looking on Sir Roger with a frank serenity ; “ Come,” said he, “ my good knight ; you must not be more tenacious for William Wallace than he is for himself ! While he possesses such a zealous friend as Kirkpatrick of Torthorald, he need not now fear the arms of a thousand Heselrigges.”

“ No, nor of Edwards either !” cried Kirkpatrick, once more looking boldly up, and shaking his broad claymore :—“ My thistle has a point, to sting all to the death, who would pass between this arm and my leader’s breast.”

“ May heaven long preserve the valiant Wallace !” was the prayer of every feeble voice, as he left the hall, to visit his own wounded, in an upper chamber. The interview was short and satisfactory. “ Ah ! sir,” cried one of them,

“ I cannot tell how it is, but when I see you, I feel as if I beheld the very soul of my country, or its guardian angel, standing before me ;— a something I cannot describe, but it fills me with courage and comfort !”

“ You see an honest Scot standing before you, my good Duncan,” replied Wallace ; “ and that is no mean personage ; for it is one who knows no use of his life, but as it fulfils his duty to his country !”

“ Oh, that the sound of that voice could penetrate to every ear in Scotland !” rejoined the soldier ; “ it would be more than the call of the trumpet, to bring them to the field !”

“ And from the summit of this rock, many have already heard it ; and more shall be aroused !” cried Murray, returning from the door, to which one of his men had beckoned him : “ Here is a man, come to announce that Malcolm, Earl of Lennox, passing by the foot of this rock, saw the Scottish standard flying from its citadel ; and, as overjoyed as amazed at the sight, he sends to request the favour of being admitted.”

“ Let me bring him hither !” interrupted Kirkpatrick ; “ he is brave as the day, and will be a noble auxiliary.”

“ Every true Scot, must be welcome to these walls,” returned Wallace.

Kirkpatrick hastened from the tower, to the northern side of the rock ; at the foot of which stood the Earl and his train. With all the pride of a freeman and a victor, Sir Roger descended the height. Lennox advanced to meet him. “ What is it I see ? Sir Roger Kirkpatrick master of this citadel, and our king’s colours flying from its towers ! Where is Earl de Valence ? Where the English garrison ?”

“ The English garrison,” replied Kirkpatrick, “ are now twelve hundred men, beneath the waters of the Clyde. De Valence is fled ; and this fortress, manned with a few hardy Scots, shall sink into the waves, before it again bear the English dragon on its walls.”

“ And you, noble knight,” cried Lennox, “ have achieved all this ! You are the dawn to a blessed day for Scotland !”

“ No,” replied Kirkpatrick ; “ I am but a follower of

the man who has struck the blow. Sir William Wallace of Ellerslie, is our chief; and with the power of his virtues, he subdues not only friends, but enemies, to his command."

He then exultingly narrated the happy events of the last four and twenty hours. The Earl listened with wonder and joy. "What!" cried he, "so noble a plan for Scotland, and I ignorant of it? — I, that have not waked nor slept, day nor night, for many a month, without thinking, or dreaming, of some enterprise to free my country: — and behold it is achieved in a moment! — I see the stroke, as a bolt from Heaven; and, I pray Heaven, it may light the sacrifice throughout the nation!"

"Lead me, worthy knight, lead me to your chief; for he shall be mine too: he shall command Malcolm Lennox, and all his clan."

Kirkpatrick gladly turned to obey him; and they mounted the ascent together. Within the barbican gate stood Wallace, with Scrymgeour and Murray. The Earl knew Scrymgeour well, having often seen him in the field as hereditary standard-bearer of the kingdom; of the persons of the others he was ignorant.

"There is Wallace!" exclaimed Kirkpatrick.

"Not one of those very young men?" interrogated the Earl.

"Even so," was the answer of the knight; "but his is the youth of the brave son of Ammon; grey beards are glad to bow before his golden locks; for beneath them is wisdom."

As he spoke, they entered the barbican; and Wallace (whom the penetrating eye of Lennox had already singled out for the chief) advanced to meet his guest.

"Earl," said he, "you are welcome to Dumbarton castle."

"Bravest of my countrymen!" returned Lennox, clasping him in his arms; "receive a soldier's embrace; receive the gratitude of a loyal heart! accept my services, my arms, my men: my all, I devote to Scotland and the great cause."

Wallace for a moment did not answer; but warmly straining the Earl to his breast, said, as he released him, "Such support will give sinews to our power. A few

months, and, with the blessing of that arm which has already mowed down the ranks which opposed us, we shall see Scotland at liberty."

"And may Heaven, brave Wallace!" exclaimed Lennox, "grant us thine arm to wield its scythe! But how have you accomplished this? How has your few, overthrown this English host?"

"He strikes home, when right points his sword," replied Wallace; "the injuries of Scotland were my guide, and justice my companion. We feared nothing, for God was with us; we feared nothing, and in His might we conquered."

"And shall yet conquer!" cried Lennox, kindling with the enthusiasm that blazed from the eyes of Wallace; "I feel the strength of our cause; and from this hour, I devote myself to assert it, or to die."

"Not to die! my noble lord," said Murray; "we have yet many an eve, to dance over the buried fetters of Scotland. And as a beginning of our jollities, I must remind our leader, that my aunt's board awaits him."

Lord Lennox understood from this address, it was the brave Murray who spoke to him; for he had heard sufficient from Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, to explain how the Countess of Mar, and her patriot husband, came within those walls.

The Countess, having arrayed herself with all her powers, to receive her deliverer, awaited the hour of his arrival with an emotion at her heart, which made it bound against her bosom, when she saw the object of her wishes advancing along the court-yard. All others were lost to her impatient eyes; and hastily rising from the window as the chiefs entered the porch, she crossed the room to meet them at the door.

The Earl of Lennox stood amazed, at sight of so much beauty and splendour, in such a scene. Lady Mar had hardly attained her thirty-fifth year; but from the graces of her person, and the address with which she set forth all her charms, the enchanted gazer found it impossible to suppose her more than three or four and twenty. Thus happily formed by nature, and habited in a suit of velvet, overlaid with Cyprus-work of gold; blazing with jewels

about her head ; and her feet clad in silver-fretted sandals ; Lennox thought she looked more like some triumphant queen, than a wife who had so lately shared captivity with an outlawed husband.* Murray started, at such unexpected magnificence in his aunt. But Wallace scarcely observed it was any thing unusual ; and bowing to her, presented the Earl of Lennox. She smiled ; and saying a few words of welcome to the Earl, gave her hand to Wallace, to lead her back into the chamber.

Lord Mar had risen from his seat ; and leaning on his sword (for his warlike arm refused any other staff), stood up on their entrance. At sight of Lord Lennox, he uttered an exclamation of glad surprise. Lennox embraced him : — “ I too, am come to enlist under the banners of this young Leonidas.”

“ God armeth the patriot !” was all the reply that Mar made, while the big tears rolled over his cheek, and he shook him by the hand.

“ I have four hundred stout Lennox-men,” continued the Earl, “ who by to-morrow’s eve, shall be ready to follow our leader to the very borders.”

“ Not so soon,” interrupted the Countess ; “ our deliverer needs repose.”

“ I thank your benevolence, Lady Mar,” returned Wallace ; “ but the issue of last night, and the sight of Lord Lennox this day, with the promise of so great a support, are such aliments, that — we must go forward.”

“ Ay, to be sure,” joined Kirkpatrick ; “ Dumbarton was not taken during our sleep : and if we stay loitering here, the devil that holds Stirling castle, may follow the scent of De Valence ; and so I lose my revenge !”

“ What ?” cried the Countess, “ and is my lord to be left again to his enemies ? Sir William Wallace, I should have thought — ”

“ Every thing, madam,” rejoined he, “ that is demonstrative of my devotion to your venerable lord ! — But with a brave garrison, I hope you will consider him safe here,

* This was the style for state dress, worn by noble ladies in the thirteenth century ; the crusades having introduced much gorgeous apparel.

until a wider range of security be won, to enable you to retire to Braemar."

As the apostrophe to Wallace, in the latter part of the Countess's speech, had been addressed to himself in rather a low voice, his reply was made in a similar tone; so that Lord Mar did not hear any part of the answer, except the concluding words. But then he exclaimed, "Nay, my ever fearful Joanna, art thou making objections to keeping garrison here?"

"I confess," replied Wallace, "that an armed citadel is not the most pleasant abode for a lady; but at present, excepting perhaps the church, it is the safest; and I would not advise your lady to remove hence, until the plain be made as free as this mountain."

The sewer now announced the board in the hall; and the Countess leading the way, reluctantly gave her hand to the Earl of Lennox. Lord Mar leaned on the arm of Wallace; who was followed by Edwin, and the other chieftains.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CITADEL.

DURING the repast, the Countess fixed her insatiate eyes on the manly, yet youthful countenance of the heroic Wallace. His plumed helmet was now laid aside; and the heavy corslet unbuckled from his breast, disclosing the symmetry of his fine form, left its graceful movements to be displayed with advantage by the flexible folds of his simple tartan vest. Was it the formidable Wallace she looked on; — bathed in the blood of Heselrigge, and breathing vengeance against the adherents of the tyrant Edward? — It was, then, the enemy of her kinsmen of the house of Cummin! It was the man, for whom her husband had embraced so many dangers! it was the man whom she had denounced to one of those kinsmen; and whom she had betrayed to the

hazard of an ignominious death ! But where, now, was the fierce rebel, — the ruiner of her peace, — the outlaw whom she had wished in his grave ?

The last idea was distraction. She could have fallen at his feet, and bathing them with her tears, have implored his pity and forgiveness. Even as the wish sprung in her mind, she asked herself — “ Did he know all, could he pardon such a weight of injuries ? ” She cast her eyes with a wild expression upon his face. The mildness of heaven was there ; and the peace too, she might have thought, had not his eye carried a chastened sadness in its look, which told that something dire and sorrowful was buried deep within. It was a look that dissolved the soul which gazed on it. The Countess felt her heart throb violently. At that moment Wallace addressed a few words to her, but she knew not what they were ; her soul was in tumults, and a mist passed over her sight, which, for a moment, seemed to wrap all her senses in a trance.

The unconscious object of these emotions, bowed to her inarticulate reply ; supposing that the mingling voices of others, had made him hear hers indistinctly.

Lady Mar found her situation so strange, and her agitation so inexplicable, that feeling it impossible to remain longer without giving way to a burst of tears, she rose from her seat, and forcing a smile with her curtesy to the company, left the room.

On gaining the upper apartment, she threw herself along the nearest couch, and striking her breast, exclaimed, “ What is this within me ? How does my soul seem to pour itself out to this man ! Oh ! how does it extend itself, as if it would absorb his, even at my eyes ! Only twelve hours — hardly twelve hours, have I seen this William Wallace, and yet my very being is now lost in his ! ”

While thus speaking, she covered her face with her handkerchief, but no tears now started to be wiped away. The fire in her veins dried their source, and with burning blushes she rose from her seat. “ Fatal, fatal hour ! Why didst thou come here, too lovely Wallace, to rob me of my peace ? O ! why did I ever look on that face ? — or rather, blessed saints ! ” cried she, clasping her hands in wild pas-

sion, " why did I ever shackle this hand? — why did I ever render such a sacrifice necessary! Wallace is now free; had I been free? — But wretch, wretch, wretch! — I could tear out this betrayed heart! — I could trample on that of the perfidious dotard, that made me such a slave!" She gasped for breath, and again seating herself, reclined her beating temples against the couch.

She was now silent; but thoughts, not less intense, not less fraught with self-reproach and anguish, occupied her mind. Should this god of her idolatry ever discover that it was her information, which had sent Earl de Valence's men to surround him in the mountains; should he ever learn that at Bothwell she had betrayed the cause on which he had set his life; she felt that moment would be her last. For now, to sate her eyes with gazing on him, to hear the sound of his voice, to receive his smiles, seemed to her, a joy she could only surrender with her existence. What then was the prospect of so soon losing him, even to crown himself with honour, but to her a living death!

To defer this departure, was all her study, — all her hope; and fearful that his restless valour might urge him to accompany Murray in his intended convoy of Helen to the Tweed, she determined to persuade her nephew to set off without the knowledge of his general. She did not allow that it was the youthful beauty, and more lovely mind of her daughter-in-law, which she feared; even to herself she cloaked her alarm, under the plausible excuse of care for the chieftain's safety. Composed by this arrangement, her disturbed features became smooth; and with even a sedate air, she received her lord, and his brave friends, when they soon after entered the chamber.

But the object of her wishes did not appear. Wallace had taken Lord Lennox, to view the dispositions of the fortress. Ill satisfied as she was with this prolonged absence, she did not fail to turn it to advantage; and while her lord, and his friends, were examining a draft of Scotland (which Wallace had sketched after she left the banqueting room), she took Lord Andrew aside, to converse with him on the subject nearest to her heart.

" It certainly belongs to me alone, her kinsman and

friend, to protect Helen to the Tweed, if there she must go," returned Murray; "but, my good lady, I cannot comprehend why I am to lead my fair cousin such a pilgrimage. She is not afraid of heroes! you are safe in Dumbarton; and why not bring her here also?"

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed the Countess, thrown off her guard. Murray looked at her with surprise. It recalled her to self-possession, and she resumed. "So lovely a creature, in this castle, would be a dangerous magnet. You must have known, that it was the hope of obtaining her, which attracted the Lord Soulis, and Earl de Valence to Bothwell. The whole castle rung with the quarrel of these two lords upon her account, when you so fortunately effected her escape. — Should it be known that she is here, the same fierce desire of obtaining her, would give double excitement to De Valence to recover the place; and the consequences, who can answer for?"

By this argument, Murray was persuaded to relinquish the idea of conveying Helen to Dumbarton; but remembering what Wallace had said respecting the safety of a religious sanctuary, he advised that she should be left at St. Fillan's, till the cause of Scotland might be more firmly established. "Send a messenger to inform her of the rescue of Dumbarton, and of your and my uncle's health," continued he; "and that will be sufficient to make her happy."

That she was not to be thrown in Wallace's way, satisfied Lady Mar; and indifferent whether Helen's seclusion were under the Eildon tree*, or the Holyrood, she approved Murray's decision. Relieved from apprehension, her face became again dressed in smiles; and, with a bounding step, she rose to welcome the re-entrance of Wallace, with the Earl of Lennox.

Absorbed in one thought, every charm she possessed was directed to the same point. She played finely on the lute, and sung with all the grace of her country. What gentle

* The Eildon tree is famous in tradition. It stood near Learmont tower on the Leeder, the seat of Thomas the sage, or prophet of Ercildown. It was reported that he here met a fairy who endowed him with many supernatural gifts; and that from this spot he generally uttered his predictions. The tree no longer exists, but the place where it stood is marked by a large stone called the Eildon-tree stone.

heart was not to be affected by music? She determined it should be one of the spells by which she meant to attract Wallace. She took up one of the lutes, (which, with other musical instruments, decorated the apartments of the luxurious De Valence,) and touching it with exquisite delicacy, breathed the most pathetic air her memory could dictate.

“ If on the heath she moved, her breast was whiter than the down of Cana ;
 If on the sea-beat shore, than the foam of the rolling ocean.
 Her eyes were two stars of light. Her face was heaven's bow in showers.
 Her dark hair flowed around it, like the streaming clouds.
 Thou wert the dweller of souls, white-handed Strnadona ! ”

Wallace rose from his chair, which she had placed near her. She had designed that these tender words of the bard of Morven, should suggest to her hearer the observation of her own resembling beauties. But he saw in them only the lovely *dweller of his own soul*: and walking towards a window, stood there, with his eye fixed on the descending sun. “ So has set all my joys. So is life to me, a world without a sun, — cold, cold, and charmless ! ”

The Countess vainly believed, that some sensibility advantageous to her new passion, had caused the agitation with which she saw him depart from her side ; and, intoxicated with the idea, she ran through many a melodious descant, till, touching on the first strains of *Thusa ha measg na reultan mor*, she saw Wallace start from his contemplative position, and with a pale countenance leave the room. There was something in this abruptness, which excited the alarm of the Earl of Lennox, who had also been listening to the songs : he arose instantly, and overtaking the chief at the threshold, enquired what was the matter ? “ Nothing,” answered Wallace, forcing a smile, in which the agony of his mind was too truly imprinted ; “ but music displeases me.” With this reply, he disappeared. The excuse seemed strange, but it was true ; for her, whose notes were to him sweeter than the thrush ; whose angel strains, used to greet his morning and evening hours, was silent in the grave ! He should no more see her *white hand* upon the lute ; he should no more behold that bosom, brighter than *foam upon the wave*, heave in tender transport at his applause ! What then was music to him ? A soul-

less sound; or a direfull knell, to recall the remembrance of all he had lost.

Such were his thoughts, when the words of *Thusa ha measg* rung from Lady Mar's voice. Those were the strains which Halbert used to breathe from his harp, to call his Marion to her nightly slumbers:—those were the strains with which that faithful servant had announced, that she slept to wake no more!

What wonder, then, that Wallace fled from the apartment, and buried himself, and his aroused grief, amid the distant solitudes of the beacon-hill!

While looking over the shoulder of his uncle, on the station which Stirling held amid the Oichel hills, Edwin had at intervals cast a sidelong glance upon the changing complexion of his commander; and no sooner did he see him hurry from the room, than, fearful of some disaster having befallen the garrison (which Wallace did not choose immediately to mention), he also stole out of the apartment.

After seeking the object of his anxiety for a long time without avail, he was returning on his steps, when attracted by the splendour of the moon silvering the beacon-hill, he ascended, to, once at least, tread that acclivity in light, which he had so miraculously passed in darkness. Scarce a zephyr fanned the sleeping air. He moved on with a flying step, till a deep sigh arrested him. He stopped, and listened: it was repeated again and again. He gently drew nearer, and saw a human figure reclining on the ground. The head of the apparent mourner was unbonneted, and the brightness of the moon shone on his polished forehead. Edwin thought the sound of those sighs was the same he had often heard from the breast of Wallace, and he no longer doubted having found the object of his search. He walked forward. Again the figure sighed; but with a depth so full of piercing woe, that Edwin hesitated.

A cloud had passed over the moon; but sailing off again, displayed to the anxious boy that he had indeed drawn very near his friend. "Who goes there?" exclaimed Wallace, starting on his feet.

“Your Edwin,” returned the youth. “I feared something wrong had happened, when I saw you look so sad, and leave the room abruptly.”

Wallace pressed his hand in silence. “Then some evil has befallen you?” enquired Edwin, in an agitated voice; “you do not speak!”

Wallace seated himself on a stone, and leaned his head upon the hilt of his sword. “No new evil has befallen me, Edwin: — but there is such a thing as remembrance, that stabs deeper than the dagger’s point.”

“What remembrance can wound you, my general? The Abbot of St. Columba has often told me, that memory is a balm to every ill, with the good: and have not you been good to all? — The benefactor, the preserver of thousands! Surely, if man can be happy, it must be Sir William Wallace!”

“And so I am, my Edwin, when I contemplate the end. But, in the interval, with all thy sweet philosophy, is it not written here, ‘that man was made to mourn?’” He put his hand on his heart; and then, after a short pause, resumed: — “Doubly I mourn, doubly am I bereaved; for, had it not been for an enemy, more fell than he which beguiled Adam of Paradise, I might have been a father; I might have lived to have gloried in a son like thee; I might have seen my wedded angel, clasp such a blessing to her bosom; but now, both are cold in clay! These are the recollections, which sometimes draw tears down thy general’s cheeks. And, do not believe, brother of my soul, (said he, pressing the now weeping Edwin to his breast,) that they disgrace his manhood. The Son of God wept over the tomb of his friend; and shall I deny a few tears, dropped in stealth, over the grave of my wife and child?”

Edwin sobbed aloud: “No son could love you dearer than I do. — Ah, let my duty, my affection, teach you to forget you have lost a child. I will replace all to you, but your Marion; and she, the pitying Son of Mary will restore to you in the kingdom of heaven.”

Wallace looked steadfastly at the young preacher. “‘Out of the mouths of babes we shall hear wisdom!’ Thine, dear

Edwin, I will lay to heart. Thou shalt comfort me, when my hermit-soul shuts out all the world besides."

"Then I am indeed your brother!" cried the happy youth; "admit me but to your heart; and no fraternal, no filial tie, shall be more strongly linked than mine."

"What tender affections I can spare from those resplendent regions," answered Wallace, pointing to the skies, "are thine. The fervours of my once ardent soul are Scotland's, or I die. But thou art too young, my brother," added he, interrupting himself, "to understand all the feelings, all the seeming contradictions of my contending heart."

"Not so," answered Edwin, with a modest blush: "what was Lady Marion's you now devote to Scotland. The blaze of those affections which were hers, would consume your being, did you not pour it forth on your country. Were you not a patriot, grief would prey upon your life."

"You have read me, Edwin," replied Wallace; "and that you may never love to idolatry, learn this also. Though Scotland lay in ruin, I was happy:—I felt no captivity, while in Marion's arms: even oppression was forgotten, when she made the sufferer's tears cease to flow. She absorbed my wishes, my thoughts, and life:—and she was wrested from me, that I might feel myself a slave; that the iron might enter into my soul, with which I was to pull down tyranny,—and free my country. Mark my sacrifice, young man," cried Wallace, starting on his feet; "it even now smokes—and the flames are here inextinguishable." He struck his hand upon his breast. "Never love as I have loved; and you may be a patriot, without tasting of my bitter cup!"

Edwin trembled: his tears were checked. "I can love no one better than I do you, my general! and is there any crime in that?"

Wallace in a moment recovered from the transient wildness which had possessed him: "None, my Edwin," replied he; "the affections are never criminal, but when, by their excess, they blind us to other duties. The offence of mine is judged, and I bow to the penalty. When that is

paid, then may my ashes sleep in rescued Scotland!— Then may the God of victory, and of mercy, grant that the seraph spirits of my wife, and infant, may meet my pardoned soul in paradise.” Edwin wept afresh. “Cease, dear boy!” said he; “these presages are very comforting; they whisper, that the path of glory leads thy brother to his home.” As he spoke, he took the arm of the silent Edwin (whose sensibility locked up the powers of speech), and putting it through his, they descended the hill together.

On the open ground before the great tower, they were met by Murray. “I come to seek you,” cried he: “we have had woe on woe, in the citadel, since you left it.”

“Nothing very calamitous,” returned Wallace, “if we may guess by the merry aspect of our ambassador.”

“Only a little whirlwind of my aunt’s; in which we have had airs, and showers, enough to wet us through, and blow us dry again.”

The conduct of the lady had been even more extravagant, than her nephew chose to describe. After the knight’s departure, when the chiefs entered into conversation respecting his future plans, and Lennox mentioned, that when his men should arrive (for whom he had that evening despatched Ker) it was Wallace’s intention to march immediately for Stirling; whither, it could hardly be doubted, Aymer de Valence had fled. “I shall be left here,” continued the Earl, “to relieve you, Lord Mar, from the severer duties attendant on being governor of this place.”

No sooner did these words reach the ears of the Countess, than she was struck with despair; and hastening towards her husband, she earnestly exclaimed—“You will not suffer this?”

“No,” returned the Earl, mistaking her meaning; “not being able to perform the duties attendant on the responsible station with which Wallace would honour me, I shall relinquish it altogether to Lord Lennox; and be amply satisfied in finding myself under his protection.”

“Ah, where is protection, without Sir William Wallace?” cried she. “If he go, the enemy will return. Who then will repel them from these walls? Who will

defend your wife, and only son, from falling again into the hands of our doubly incensed foes."

Mar observed Lord Lennox colour, at this imputation on his bravery; and shocked at the affront which his unreflecting wife seemed to give to so gallant a chief, he hastily replied, "Though I cannot boast, yet the Earl of Lennox is an able representative of our commander."

"I will die, madam," interrupted Lennox, "before any thing hostile approaches you or your children."

She attended slightly to this assurance; and again addressed her lord, with fresh arguments for the detention of Wallace. Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, impatient under all this foolery, as he deemed it, at last abruptly said, "Be assured, madam, Samson was not brought into the world, to keep guard over women! and I hope ours, will know his duty better, than allow himself to be tied to the girdle of any lady in Christendom."

The brave old Earl was offended with this roughness; but ere he could so express himself, its object darted her own severe retort on Kirkpatrick; and then turning to her husband, with two or three hysterical sobs, exclaimed — "It is well seen what will be my fate when Wallace is gone! Would he have stood by, and beheld me thus insulted!"

Distressed with shame at her conduct, and anxious to remove her fears, Lord Mar softly whispered her, and threw his arm about her waist. She thrust him from her: — "You care not what may become of me; and my heart disdains your blandishments."

Lennox rose in silence, and walked to the other end of the chamber. — Sir Roger Kirkpatrick followed him, muttering, pretty audibly, his thanks to St. Andrew, that he had never been yoked with a wife. — Scrymgeour and Murray tried to allay the storm in her bosom, by circumstantially detailing, how the fortress must be equally safe under the care of Lennox, as of Wallace. But they discoursed in vain; she was obstinate, and at last left the room in a passion of tears.

On the return of Wallace, Lord Lennox advanced to meet him: — "What shall we do?" said he: "Without you have the witchcraft of Hercules, and can be in two

places at once, I fear we must either leave the rest of Scotland to fight for itself, or never restore peace to this castle!"

Wallace smiled; but before he could answer, Lady Mar, having heard his voice ascending the stairs, suddenly entered the room. She held her infant in her arms. Her air was composed, but her eyes yet shone in tears. At this sight, Lord Lennox, sufficiently disgusted with the lady, taking Murray by the arm, withdrew with him out of the apartment.

She approached Wallace: "You are come, my deliverer, to speak comfort to the mother of this poor babe. My cruel lord here, and the Earl of Lennox, say you mean to abandon us in this castle?"

"It cannot be abandoned," returned the chief, "while they are in it. But if so warlike a scene alarms you, would not a religious sanctuary——"

"Not for worlds!" cried she, interrupting him; "what altar is held sacred, by the enemies of our country!—O! wonder not, then," added she, putting her face to that of her child, that I should wish this innocent babe never to be from under the wing of such a protector."

"But that is impossible, Joanna," rejoined the Earl; "Sir William Wallace has duties to perform, superior to that of keeping watch over any private family. His presence is wanted in the field; and we should be traitors to the cause, did we detain him."

"Unfeeling Mar," cried she, bursting into tears; "thus to echo the words of the barbarian Kirkpatrick; thus to condemn us to die!—You will see another tragedy; your own wife, and child, seized by the returning Southrons, and laid bleeding at your feet!"

Wallace walked from her much agitated.

"Rather inhuman Joanna," whispered Lord Mar to her, in an angry voice, "to make such a reference, in the presence of our protector!—I cannot stay to listen to a pertinacity, as insulting to the rest of our brave leaders, as it is oppressive to Sir William Wallace. Edwin, you will come for me, when your aunt consents to be guided by

right reason." While yet speaking, he entered the passage that led to his own apartment.

Lady Mar sat a few minutes silent. She was not to be warned from her determination, by the displeasure of a husband, whom she now regarded with the impatience of a bond-woman towards her task-master; and only solicitous to compass the detention of Sir William Wallace, she resolved, if he would not remain at the castle, to persuade him to conduct her himself, to her husband's territories in the Isle of Bute. She could contrive to make the journey occupy more than one day; and for holding him longer, she would trust to chance, and her own inventions. With these resolutions, she looked up. — Edwin was speaking to Wallace. — "What does he tell you?" said she, "that my Lord has left me in displeasure? — Alas! he comprehends not, a mother's anxiety for her sole remaining child. — One of my sweet twins, my dear daughter, died on my being brought a prisoner to this horrid fortress; and to lose this also, would be more than I could bear. — Look at this babe," cried she, holding it up to him; "let it plead to you, for its life! — Guard it, noble Wallace, whatever may become of me."

The appeal of a mother, made instant way to Sir William's heart; even her weaknesses, did they point to anxiety respecting her offspring, were sacred with him: — "What would you have me do, madam? — If you fear to remain here, tell me where you think you would be safer, and I will be your conductor?"

She paused, to repress the triumph with which this proposal filled her; and then, with downcast eyes, replied: — "In the sea-girt Bute, stands Rothsay, a rude, but strong castle of my Lord's. It possesses nothing to attract the notice of the enemy; and there I might remain in perfect safety. — Lord Mar may keep his station here, until a general victory sends you, noble Wallace, to restore my child to its father."

Wallace bowed his assent to her proposal; and Edwin, remembering the Earl's injunction, enquired if he might inform him of what was decided. — When he left the room, Lady Mar rose, and suddenly putting her son into

the arms of Wallace: — “Let his sweet caresses, thank you.” Wallace trembled, as she pressed its little mouth to his; and mistranslating this emotion, she dropped her face upon the infant’s; and in affecting to kiss him, rested her head upon the bosom of the chief. There was something in this action, more than maternal: it surprised, and disconcerted, Wallace. “Madam,” said he, drawing back, and relinquishing the child, “I do not require any thanks, for serving the wife and son of Lord Mar.”

At that moment the Earl entered. Lady Mar, flattered herself that the repelling action of Wallace, and his cold answer, had arisen from the expectation of this entrance; yet blushing with something like disappointment, she hastily uttered a few agitated words, to inform her husband that Bute was to be her future sanctuary.

Lord Mar approved it; and declared his determination to accompany her. “In my state, I can be of little use here,” said he; “you will require protection, even in that seclusion; and therefore, leaving Lord Lennox sole governor of Dumbarton, I shall unquestionably attend you to Rothsay.”

This arrangement would break in upon the lonely conversation she had meditated to have with Wallace, and therefore the Countess objected to the proposal. But none of her arguments being admitted by her lord, and, as Wallace did not support them by a word, she was obliged to make a merit of necessity, and consent to her husband being the guardian of her new abode.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RENFREWSHIRE.

TOWARDS evening the next day, Ker not only returned with the Earl of Lennox’s men; but brought with them Sir Eustace Maxwell of Carlaveroch. That brave knight happened to be in the neighbourhood, the very same night in which De Valence fled before the arms of Wallace across

the Clyde ; and he no sooner saw the Scottish colours on the walls of Dumbarton, than finding out who was their planter, his soul took fire ; and stung with a generous ambition of equalling in glory his equal in years, he determined to assist, while he emulated the victor.

To this end, he went into the town of Dumbarton, and traversed the adjoining country, striving to enlighten the understandings of the stupidly satisfied, and to excite the discontented to revolt. With most he failed. Some took upon them to lecture him on “ fishing in troubled waters ;” and warned him, if he would keep his head on his shoulders, to wear his yoke in peace. Others thought the project too arduous for men of small means : they wished well to the arms of Sir William Wallace ; and, should he continue successful, would watch the moment to aid him with all their little power. Those who had much property, feared to risk its loss, by embracing a doubtful struggle. Some were too great cowards, to fight for the rights, they would gladly regain by the exertions of others. And others again, who had families, shrunk from taking part in a cause, which, should it fail, would not only put their lives in danger, but expose their offspring to the revenge of a resentful enemy. This was the best apology of any that had been offered : natural affection was the pleader ; and though blinded to its true interest, such weakness had an amiable source, and so was pardoned. But the other pleas were so basely selfish, so undeserving of any thing but scorn, that Sir Eustace Maxwell could not forbear expressing it. “ When Sir William Wallace is entering full sail, you will send your birlings to tow him in ! but if a plank could save him now, you would not throw it to him ! I understand you, sirs, and shall trouble your patriotism no more.”

In short, none but about a hundred poor fellows, whom outrages had rendered desperate ; and a few brave spirits, who would put all to the hazard, for so good a cause ; could be prevailed on to hold themselves in readiness, to obey Sir Eustace, when he should see the moment to conduct them to Sir William Wallace. He was trying his eloquence amongst the clan of Lennox, when Ker, arriving,

stamped his persuasions with truth ; and above five hundred men arranged themselves under their lord's standard. Maxwell gladly explained himself to Wallace's lieutenant ; and summoning his little reserve, they marched with flying pennons through the town of Dumbarton. At sight of so much larger a power, than they expected would venture to appear in arms, and sanctioned by the example of the Earl of Lennox (whose name held a great influence in those parts), several, who before had held back, from doubting their own judgment, now came forward ; and nearly eight hundred well-appointed men marched into the fortress.

So large a reinforcement, was gratefully received by Wallace ; and he welcomed Maxwell with a cordiality, which inspired that young knight with an affection equal to his zeal.

A council being held respecting the disposal of the new troops, it was decided that the Lennox men must remain with their earl in garrison ; while those from Dumbarton, under the command of Maxwell, should follow Wallace in the prosecution of his conquests.

These preliminaries being arranged, the remainder of the day was dedicated to more mature deliberations ; to the unfolding of the plan of warfare which Wallace had conceived. As he first sketched the general outline of his design, and then proceeded to the particulars of each military movement, he displayed such comprehensiveness of mind ; such depth of penetration ; clearness of apprehension ; facility in expedients ; promptitude in perceiving, and fixing on the most favourable points of attack ; explaining their bearings upon the power of the enemy ; and where the possession of such a castle, would compel the neighbouring ones to surrender ; and where occupying of the hills with bands of resolute Scots, would be a more efficient bulwark than a thousand towers — that Maxwell gazed on him with admiration, and Lennox with wonder.

Mar had seen the power of his arms ; Murray had already drank the experience of a veteran, from his genius ; hence, they were not surprised, on hearing that which filled strangers with amazement.

Lennox gazed on his leader's youthful countenance,

doubting whether he really were listening to military plans, great as general ever formed ; or were visited, in vision, by some heroic shade, who offered to his sleeping fancy, designs far vaster than his waking faculties could have conceived. He had thought, that the young Wallace might have won Dumbarton by a bold stroke : and that, when his invincible courage should be steered by graver heads, every success might be expected from his arms : but now that he heard him informing veterans on the art of war ; and saw, that when turned to any cause of policy, “ the gordian knot of it he did unloose, familiar as his garter ; ” he marvelled, and said within himself “ Surely this man is born to be a sovereign ! ”

Maxwell, though equally astonished, was not so rapt. “ You have made arms the study of your life ? ” enquired he.

“ It was the study of my earliest days,” returned Wallace. “ But when Scotland lost her freedom ; as the sword was not drawn in her defence, I looked not where it lay. I then studied the arts of peace : that is over ; and now the passion of my soul revives. When the mind is bent on one object only, all becomes clear that leads to it : — zeal, in such cases, is almost genius.”

Soon after these observations, it was admitted, that Wallace might attend Lord Mar and his family, on the morrow, to the Isle of Bute.

When the dawn broke, he arose from his heather-bed in the great tower ; and calling forth twenty of the Bothwell men, to escort their lord, he told Ireland, he should expect to have a cheering account of the wounded, when he returned.

“ And to assure the poor fellows,” rejoined the honest soldier, “ that something of yourself still keeps watch over their slumbers, leave me the sturdy sword with which you won Dumbarton. It shall be hung up in their sight* ; and a good soldier’s wounds will heal by looking on it.”

* This tower, within the fortress of Dumbarton, is still called *Wallace’s tower* ; and a sword is shown there as the one that belonged to Wallace. This sword was brought to the Tower of London, a few years ago, by the desire of our late King, George IV., to be kept there along with other esteemed British relics. But the Scottish nation, with a jealous pride in their champion’s

Wallace smiled : “ Were it our holy King David’s, we might expect such a miracle. But you are welcome to it ; and here let it remain till I take it hence. Meanwhile, lend me yours, Stephen ; for a truer never fought for Scotland.”

A glow of conscious valour flushed the cheek of the veteran. “ There, my dear lord,” said he, presenting it ; “ it will not dishonour your hand, for it cut down many a proud Norwegian on the field of Largs.”

Wallace took the sword, and turned, to meet Murray with Edwin, in the portal. When they reached the citadel, Lennox and all the officers in the garrison were assembled, to bid their chief a short adieu. Wallace spoke to each separately ; and then approaching the Countess, led her down the rock to the horses, which were to convey them to the frith of Clyde. Lord Mar, between Murray and Edwin, followed ; and the servants, and guard, completed the suite.

Being well mounted, they pleasantly pursued their way ; avoiding all inhabited places, and resting in the deepest recesses of the hills. Lord Mar had proposed travelling all night ; but at the close of the evening, his Countess complained of fatigue, declaring she could not advance farther than the eastern bank of the river Cart. No shelter appeared in sight, excepting a thick and extensive wood of hazels ; but the air being mild, and the lady obstinate, Lord Mar at last became reconciled to his wife and son passing the night with no other canopy than the trees. Wallace ordered cloaks to be spread on the ground for the Countess and her women ; and seeing them laid to rest, planted his men to keep guard around the circle.

The moon had sunk in the west, before the whole of his little camp were asleep. But when all seemed composed, he wandered forth by the dim light of the stars, to view the surrounding country ; a country he had so often traversed in his boyish days. A little onwards, in green

weapon of victory worthy of them, became discontented at its removal ; the lower orders particularly, murmured at its being given to a place, where his life had been taken from him ; and our gracious monarch commanded that it should be restored. The traveller may therefore see it at Dumbarton still.

Renfrewshire, lay the lands of his father ; but that Ellerslie of his ancestors, like his own Ellerslie of Clydesdale, his country's enemies had levelled with the ground ! He turned in anguish of heart towards the south, for there less racking remembrances hovered over the distant hills.

Leaning on the shattered stump of an old tree, he fixed his eyes on the far-stretching plain, which alone seemed to divide him from the venerable Sir Ronald Crawford, and his youthful haunts, at Ayr. Full of thoughts of her who used to share those happy scenes—he heard a sigh behind him. He turned round, and beheld a female figure disappear amongst the trees. He stood motionless : again it met his view : it seemed to approach. A strange emotion stirred within him. When he last passed these borders, he was bringing his bride from Ayr ! What then was this ethereal visitant ? The silver light of the stars, was not brighter than its airy robes, which floated in the wind. His heart paused—it beat violently—still the figure advanced. Lost in the wildness of his imagination, he exclaimed—“ Marion !” and darted forwards, as if to rush into her embrace. But it fled, and again vanished. He dropped upon the ground, in speechless disappointment.

“ 'Tis false !” cried he, recovering from his first expectation ; “ 'tis a phantom of my own creating. The pure spirit of Mariou would never fly me : I loved her too well. She would not thus redouble my grief. But I shall go to thee, wife of my soul !” cried he ; “ and that is comfort. Balm, indeed, is the Christian's hope !”

Such were his words, such were his thoughts, till the coldness of the hour, and the exhaustion of nature, putting a friendly seal upon his senses, he sunk upon the bank, and fell into a profound sleep.

When he awoke, the lark was carolling above his head ; and to his surprise he found that a plaid was laid over him. He threw it off, and beheld Edwin seated at his feet. “ This has been your doing, my kind brother,” said he ; “ but how came you to discover me ?”

“ I missed you, when the dawn broke ; and at last found you here, sleeping under the dew.”

“And has none else been astir?” enquired Wallace, thinking of the figure he had seen.

“None that I know of. All were fast asleep, when I left the party.”

Wallace began to fancy that he had been labouring under the impressions of some powerful dream, and, saying no more, he returned to the wood. Finding every body ready, he took his station; and setting forth, all proceeded cheerfully, though slowly, through the delightful valleys of Barochan. By sunset they arrived at the point of embarkation. The journey ought to have been performed in half the time; but the Countess petitioned for long rests: a compliance, with which, the younger part of the cavalcade conceded with reluctance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FRITH OF CLYDE.

AT Gourock, Murray engaged two small vessels; one for the Earl and Countess, with Wallace, as their escort; the other for himself and Edwin, to follow, with a few of the men.

It was a fine evening; and they embarked with a brisk gale in their favour.—The boatmen calculated on reaching Bute in a few hours; but ere they had been half an hour at sea, the wind veering about, obliged them to woo its breezes by a traversing motion; which, though it lengthened their voyage, increased its pleasantness, by carrying them often within near views of the ever-varying shores. Sailing under a side wind, they beheld the huge irregular rocks of Dunoon, overhanging the ocean; while from their projecting brows, hung every shrub which can live in that saline atmosphere.

“There,” whispered Lady Mar, gently inclining towards Wallace; “might the beautiful mermaid of Corie Vrekin*”

* The dangerous gulf of Corie Vrekin lies between the shores of Jura and Scarba. Superstition has tenanted its shelves and eddies with every fabulous

keep her court! — Observe how magnificently those arching cliffs overhang the hollows; and how richly they are studded with shells and sea-flowers!”

No flower of the field, or of the ocean, that came within the ken of Wallace, wasted its sweetness unadmired. He assented to the remarks of Lady Mar; who continued to expatiate on the beauties of the shores which they passed: and thus the hours fled pleasantly away, till turning the southern point of the Cowal mountains, the scene suddenly changed. The wind, which had gradually been rising, blew a violent gale from that part of the coast; and the sea being pent between the rocks which skirt the continent and the northern side of Bute, became so boisterous, that the boatmen began to think they should be driven upon the rocks of the island, instead of reaching its bay. Wallace tore down the sails; and laying his nervous arm to the oar, assisted to keep the vessel off the breakers, against which the waves were driving her. The sky collected into a gloom; and while the teeming clouds seemed descending, even to rest upon the cracking masts, the swelling of the ocean threatened to heave her up into their very bosoms.

Lady Mar looked with affright at the gathering tempest; and with difficulty was persuaded to retire under the shelter of a little awning. The Earl forgot his debility, in the general terror, and tried to re-assure the boatmen. But a tremendous sweep of the gale, driving the vessel far across the head of Bute, shot her past the mouth of Loch Fyne, towards the perilous rocks of Arran. — “Here our destruction is certain!” cried the master of the bark, at the same time confessing his ignorance of the navigation on this side of the island. Lord Mar, seizing the helm from the stupefied master, called to Wallace: — “While you keep the men to their duty,” cried he; “I will steer.”

The Earl being perfectly acquainted with the coast, Wallace gladly saw the helm in his hand. But he had scarcely stepped forward himself, to give some necessary directions, when a heavy sea, breaking over the deck, car-

demon of the ocean; and amongst the rest, tells a thousand wild legends of a beautiful mermaid who holds her marine court beneath its whirlpool. Mr. J. Leyden has written a fine ballad on this subject.

ried two of the poor mariners overboard. — Wallace instantly threw out to them a couple of ropes. Then, amidst a spray so blinding, that the vessel appeared in a cloud, and while buffeted on each side by the raging of waves, which seemed contending to tear her to pieces, she lay to for a few minutes, to rescue the men from the yawning gulf: — one caught the rope, and was saved; but the other was seen no more.

Again the bark was set loose to the current. — Wallace, now with two rowers only, applied his strength to the oars: — the master, and the only other man, were employed in the unceasing toil of laving out the accumulating water.

While the anxious chief tugged at the oar, and watched the thousand embattled cliffs which threatened destruction, his eye looked for the vessel that contained his friends. — But the liquid mountains which rolled around him, prevented all view; and with hardly a hope of seeing them more, he pursued his attempt to preserve the lives of those committed to his care.

All this while Lady Mar lay in a state of stupefaction. Having fainted at the first alarm of danger, she had fallen from swoon to swoon; and now remained, almost insensible, upon the bosoms of her maids. In a moment the vessel struck with a great shock; and the next instant, it seemed to move with a velocity incredible. — “The whirlpool! the whirlpool!” resounded from every lip. But again the rapid motion was suddenly checked; and the women, fancying they had struck on the Vrekin rock, shrieked aloud. — The cry, and the terrified words which accompanied it, aroused Lady Mar. — She started from her trance, and while the confusion redoubled, rushed forward on the deck.

The mountainous waves, and lowering clouds, borne forward by the blast, anticipated the dreariness of night. The last rays of the setting sun had long passed away; and the deep shadows of the driving heavens cast the whole into a gloom, even more terrific than absolute darkness; while the high and beetling rocks, towering aloft in precipitous walls, mocked the hopes of the sea-beaten mariner, should he even buffet the waters to reach their base; and the jagged shingles, deeply shelving beneath the waves, or

projecting their pointed summits upward, showed the crew where the rugged death would meet them.

A little onward, a thousand massy fragments, rent by former tempests from their parent cliffs, lay at the foundations of the immense acclivities, which faced the cause of their present alarm ; a whirlpool almost as terrific as that of Scarba. The moment the powerful blast drove the vessel on the outward edge of the first circle of the vortex, Wallace leaped from the deck, on the rocks ; and with the same rope in his hand with which he had saved the life of the seaman, he called to two of the men to follow him with similar ropes, fastened like his own to the prow of the vessel ; and being obeyed, they strove, by towing it along, to stem the suction of the current.

It was at this instant, that Lady Mar rushed forward upon deck. " In, for your life, Joanna ! " exclaimed the Earl. She answered him not, but looked wildly around her. No where could she see Wallace.

" Have I drowned him ? " cried she in a voice of frenzy, and striking the women from her, who would have held her back : " Let me clasp him, even in the deep waters ! "

Happily, the Earl lost the last sentence in the roaring of the storm.

" Wallace, Wallace ! " cried she, wringing her hands, and still struggling with her women. At that moment, a huge wave sinking before her, discovered the object of her fears, standing on the centre of a rock ; or rather, followed by the men in the same laborious task, tugging forward the ropes to which the bark was attached. She gazed at them with wonder and affright ; for notwithstanding the beating of the elements, (which seemed to find their breasts of iron, and their feet armed with some preternatural adhesion to the cliff,) they continued to bear resolutely forward. Fortunately they did not now labour against the wind. Sometimes they pressed forward, on the level edge of the rock ; then a yawning chasm forced them to leap from cliff to cliff, or to spring on some more elevated projection. Thus, contending with the vortex and the storm, they at last arrived at the doubling of Cuthonrock * ; the point that was

* *Cuthon* means the mournful sound of waves.

to clear them of this minor Corie Vrekin. But at that crisis, the rope which Wallace held, broke, and with the shock he fell backwards into the sea. The foremost man uttered a dreadful cry; but ere it could be echoed by his fellows, Wallace had risen above the waves; and beating their whelming waters with his invincible arm, soon gained the vessel, and jumped upon the deck. The point was doubled; but the next moment the vessel struck, and in a manner that left no hope of getting her off. All must take to the water, or perish; for the second shock would scatter her piecemeal.

Again Lady Mar appeared. At sight of Wallace, she forgot every thing but him; and perhaps would have thrown herself into his arms, had not the anxious Earl caught her in his own.

“Are we to die?” cried she to Wallace, in a voice of horror.

“I trust that God has decreed otherwise,” was his reply. “Compose yourself: all may yet be well.”

Lord Mar, from his yet unhealed wounds, could not swim: Wallace therefore tore up the benches of the rowers, and binding them into the form of a small raft, made it the vehicle for the Earl and Countess, with her two maids and the child. While the men were towing it, and buffeting with it, through the breakers, he too threw himself into the sea to swim by its side, and be in readiness in case of accident.

Having gained the shore, or rather the broken rocks that lie at the foot of the stupendous craigs which surround the Isle of Arran, Wallace and his sturdy assistants conveyed the Countess and her terrified women up their acclivities. Fortunately for the shipwrecked voyagers, though the wind raged, its violence was of some advantage, for it nearly cleared the heavens of clouds, and allowed the moon to send forth her guiding light. By her lamp, one of the men discovered the mouth of a cavern; where Wallace gladly sheltered his dripping charges.

The child, whom he had guarded in his own arms during the difficult ascent, he now laid on the bosom of its mother.

Lady Mar kissed the hand that relinquished it, and gave way to a flood of grateful tears.

The Earl, as he sank almost powerless against the side of the cave, yet had strength enough to press Wallace to his heart:—"Ever preserver of me and mine!" cried he; "how must I bless thee!—My wife, my child—"

"Have been saved to you, my friend," interrupted Wallace, "by the presiding care of Him who walked the waves!—Without his especial arm, we must all have perished in this awful night; therefore let our thanksgivings be directed to Him alone."

"So be it!" returned the Earl; and dropping on his knees, he breathed forth so pathetic and sublime a prayer of thanks, that the Countess trembled, and bent her head upon the bosom of her child. She could not utter the solemn *Amen*, that was repeated by every voice in the cave. Her unhappy infatuation saw no higher power in this great preservation, than the hand of the man she adored. She felt that guilt was cherished in her heart; and she could not lift her eyes, to join with those, who, with the boldness of innocence, called on Heaven to attest the sanctity of their vows.

Sleep soon sealed every weary eye, excepting those of Wallace. A racking anxiety respecting the fate of the other vessel, in which were the brave men of Bothwell, and his two dear friends, filled his mind with dreadful forebodings, that they had not outlived the storm. Sometimes, when wearied nature for a few minutes sunk into slumber, he would start, grief-struck, from the body of Edwin, floating on the briny flood; and as he awoke, a cold despondence would tell him, that his dream was perhaps too true. "O! I love thee, Edwin," exclaimed he to himself; "and if my devoted heart was to be separated from all but a patriot's love! Why did I think of loving thee?—must thou too die, that Scotland may have no rival; that Wallace may feel himself quite alone?"

Thus he sat musing, and listening, with many a sigh, to the yelling gusts of wind, and louder roaring of the water. At last the former gradually subsided, and the latter, obeying the retreating tide, rolled away in hoarse murmurs.

Morning began to dawn ; and spreading upon the mountains of the opposite shore, shed a soft light over their misty sides. All was tranquil and full of beauty. That element, which, so lately in its rage, had threatened to engulf them all, now flowed by the rocks at the foot of the cave, in gentle undulations ; and where the spiral cliffs gave a little resistance, the rays of the rising sun, striking on the bursting waves, turned their vapoury showers into dropping gems.

While his companions were still wrapped in sleep, Wallace stole away, to seek some knowledge respecting the part of the Isle of Arran on which they were cast. Close by the mouth of the cave, he discovered a cleft in the rock, into which he turned, and finding the upward footing sufficiently secure, clambered to the summit. Looking around, he found himself at the skirt of a chain of high hills, which seemed to stretch from side to side over the island, while their tops, in alpine succession, rose in a thousand grotesque and pinnacled forms. The ptarmigan and capercaillie were screaming from those upper regions ; and the nimble roes, with their fawns, bounding through the green defiles below. No trace of human habitation appeared ; but from the size, and known population of the island, he knew he could not be far from inhabitants ; and thinking it best to send the boatmen in search of them, he retraced his steps. The morning vapours were fast rolling their snowy wreaths down the opposite mountains, whose heads, shining in resplendent purple, seemed to view themselves in the bright reflections of the now smooth sea. Nature, like a proud conqueror, appeared to have put on a triumphal garb, in exultation of the devastation she had committed the night before. Wallace shuddered, as the parallel occurred to his mind, and turned from the scene.

On re-entering the cave he despatched the seamen, and disposed himself to watch by the sides of his still sleeping friends. An hour hardly elapsed before the men returned, bringing with them a large boat and its proprietor. But, alas ! no tidings of Murray and Edwin, whom he had hoped might have been driven somewhere on the island.

In bringing the boat round to the creek under the rock, the men discovered that the sea had driven their wreck between two projecting rocks, where it now lay wedged. Though ruined as a vessel, sufficient held together, to warrant their exertions to save the property. Accordingly they entered it, and drew thence most of the valuables which belonged to Lord Mar.

While this was doing, Wallace re-ascended to the cave ; and finding the Earl awake, told him a boat was ready for their re-embarkation. " But where, my friend, are my nephews ? " enquired he : " Alas ! has this fatal expedition robbed me of them ! "

Wallace tried to inspire him with a hope, he hardly dared credit himself, that they had been saved on some more distant shore. The voices of the chiefs awakened the women ; but the Countess still slept. Aware that she would resist trusting herself to the waves again, Lord Mar desired that she might be taken on board without disturbing her. This was readily done ; the men having only to take up the extremities of the plaid on which she lay, and so carry her, with an imperceptible motion, to the boat. The Earl received her head on his bosom. All were then on board ; the rowers struck their oars, and once more the little party found themselves launched upon the sea.

While they were yet midway between the isles, with a bright sun playing its sparkling beams upon the gently rippling waves, the Countess, heaving a deep sigh, slowly opened her eyes. All around, glared with the light of day ; she felt the motion of the boat, and raising her head, saw that she was again embarked on the treacherous element, on which she had lately experienced so many terrors. She grew deadly pale, and grasped her husband's hand. " My dear Joanna," cried he, " be not alarmed, we are all safe."

" And Sir William Wallace has left us ? " demanded she.

" No, madam," answered, a voice from the steerage ; " not till this party be safe at Bute, do I quit it."

She looked round with a grateful smile : " Ever generous ! How could I for a moment doubt our preserver ? "

Wallace bowed, but remained silent ; and they passed

calmly along, till the vessel came in sight of a birling*, which, bounding over the waves, was presently so near the Earl's that the figures in each could be distinctly seen. In it, the chiefs, to their rapturous surprise, beheld Murray and Edwin. The latter with a cry of joy, leaped into the sea; the next instant he was over the boat's side, and clasped in the arms of Wallace. Real transport, true happiness, now dilated the heart of the before desponding chief. He pressed the dear boy again and again to his bosom, and kissed his white forehead with all the rapture of the fondest brother. "Thank God! thank God!" was all that Edwin could say; while, at every effort to tear himself from Wallace, to congratulate his uncle on his safety, his heart, overflowing towards his friend, opened afresh, and he clung the closer to his breast; till at last, exhausted with happiness, the little hero of Dumbarton gave way to the sensibility of his tender age, and the chief felt his bosom wet with the joy-drawn tears of his youthful banneret.

While this was passing, the birling had drawn close to the boat; and Murray, shaking hands with his uncle and aunt, exclaimed to Wallace, "That urchin is such a monopoliser, I see you have not a greeting for any one else." On this Edwin raised his face, and turned to the affectionate welcomes of Lord Mar. Wallace stretched out his hand to the ever-gay Lord Andrew; and, inviting him into the boat, soon learnt, that on the portentous beginning of the storm, Murray's company made direct to the nearest creek in Bute, being better seamen than Wallace's helmsman, who, until danger stopped him, had foolishly continued to aim for Rothsay. By this prudence, without having been in much peril, or sustained any fatigue, Murray's party had landed safely. The night came on, dark and tremendous; but not doubting that the Earl's rowers had carried him into a similar haven, the young chief and his companion kept themselves very easy in a fisher's hut till morning. At an early hour, they then put themselves at the head of the Bothwell men; and, expecting they should come up with Wallace and his party at Rothsay, walked over to the castle. Their consternation was unutterable when they

* Birling is a small boat generally used by fishers.

found that Lord Mar was not there, neither had he been heard of. Full of terror, Murray and Edwin threw themselves into a birling, to seek their friends upon the seas; and when they did espy them, the joy of Edwin was so great, that not even the unfathomable gulf could stop him from flying to the embrace of his friend.

While mutual felicitations passed, the boats, now nearly side by side, reached the shore; and the seamen, jumping on the rocks, moored their vessels under the projecting towers of Rothsay. The old steward hastened to receive a master, who had not blessed his aged eyes for many a year; and when he took the infant in his arms that was to be the future representative of the house of Mar, he wept aloud. The Earl spoke to him affectionately, and then walked on with Edwin, whom he called to support him up the bank. Murray led the Countess out of the boat; while the Bothwell men so thronged about Wallace, congratulating themselves on his safety, that she saw there was no hope of his arm being then offered to her.

Having entered the castle, the steward led them into a room, in which he had spread a plentiful repast. Here Murray (having recounted the adventures of his voyage) called for a history of what had befallen his friends. The Earl gladly took up the tale; and, with many a glance of gratitude to Wallace, narrated the perilous events of their shipwreck, and providential preservation on the Isle of Arran.

Happiness now seemed to have shed her heavenly influence over every bosom. All hearts owned the grateful effects of the late rescue. The rapturous joy of Edwin burst into a thousand sallies of ardent and luxuriant imagination. The high spirits of Murray turned every transient subject into a "mirth-moving jest." The veteran Earl seemed restored to health, and to youth; and Wallace felt the sun of consolation expanding in his bosom. He had met a heart, though a young one, on which his soul might repose: that dear selected brother of his affection was saved from the whelming waves; and all his superstitious dreams of a mysterious doom vanished before this manifestation of heavenly goodness. His friend, too, the gallant Murray, was

spared. How many subjects had he for unmurmuring gratitude! And with an unclouded brow, and a happy spirit, he yielded to the impulse of the scene. He smiled; and, with an endearing graciousness, listened to every fond speaker; while his own ingenuous replies bespoke the treasures of love, which sorrow, in her cruelest aspect, had locked within his heart.

The complacency with which he regarded every one—the pouring out of his beneficent spirit, which seemed to embrace all, like his dearest kindred—turned every eye and heart towards him, as to the source of every bliss; as to a being who seemed made to love, and be beloved by every one. Lady Mar looked at him, listened to him, with her rapt soul seated in her eye. In his presence all was transport.

But when he withdrew for the night, what was then the state of her feelings! The overflowing of heart, he felt for all, she appropriated solely to herself. The sweetness of his voice, the unutterable expression of his countenance, while, as he spoke, he veiled his eyes under their long brown lashes, had raised such vague hopes in her bosom, that—he being gone, she hastened her adieus to the rest—eager to retire to bed, and there uninterruptedly muse on the happiness, of having at last touched the heart of a man for whom she would resign the world.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ISLE OF BUTE.

THE morning would have brought annihilation to the Countess's new-fledged hopes, had not Murray been the first to meet her as she came from her chamber.

While walking on the cliffs at some distance from the castle to observe the weather, he met Wallace and Edwin. They had already been across the valley to the haven, and ordered a boat round, to convey them back to Gourrock. "Postpone your flight, for pity's sake!" cried "Murray, if

you would not by discourtesy destroy what your gallantry has preserved!" He then told them that Lady Mar was preparing a feast in the glen, behind the castle; "and if you do not stay to partake it," added he, "we may expect all the witches in the isle will be bribed to sink us before we reach the shore."

After this, the general meeting of the morning was not less cordial than the separation of the night before; and when Lady Mar withdrew to give orders for her rural banquet, that time was seized by the Earl for the arrangement of matters of more consequence. In a private conversation with Murray the preceding evening, he had learnt, that, just before the party left Dumbarton, a letter had been sent to Helen, at St. Fillan's, informing her of the taking of the castle, and of the safety of her friends. This having satisfied the Earl, he did not advert to her at all, in his present discourse with Wallace; but rather avoided encumbering his occupied mind with any thing but the one great theme.

While the Earl and his friends were marshalling armies, taking towns, and storming castles; the Countess, intent on other conquests, was meaning to beguile, and destroy, that manly spirit, by soft delights, which a continuance in war's rugged scenes, she thought, was too likely to render invulnerable.

When her lord and his guests were summoned to the feast, she met them at the mouth of the glen. Having tried the effect of splendour, she now left all to the power of her natural charms, and appeared simply clad in her favourite green.* Moraig, the pretty grandchild of the steward, walked beside her, like the fairy queen of the scene; so gaily was she decorated in all the flowers of spring. "Here is the lady of my elfin revels, holding her little king in her arms!" As the Countess spoke, Moraig held up the infant of Lady Mar, dressed like herself, in a tissue gathered from the field. The sweet babe laughed and crowed, and made a spring to leap into Wallace's arms. The chief took him, and with an affectionate smile, pressed his little cheek to his.

* Green was a colour much worn by the ladies in the early ages of Scotland.

Though he had felt the repugnance of a delicate mind ; and the shuddering of a man, who held his person consecrated to the memory of the only woman he had ever loved ; though he had felt these sentiments, mingle into an abhorrence of the Countess, when she allowed her head to drop on his breast in the citadel ; and though, while he remained at Dumbarton, (without absolutely charging her to himself, with any thing designedly immodest,) he had certainly avoided her ; yet, since the wreck, the danger she had escaped, the general joy of all meeting again, had wiped away even the remembrance of his former cause of dislike ; and he now sat by her, as by a sister, fondling her child ; although at every sweet caress, it reminded him, of what might have been his, — of hopes lost to him for ever.

The repast over, the piper of the adjacent cottages appeared ; and, placing himself on a projecting rock, at the carol of his merry instrument the young peasants of both sexes jocundly came forward, and began the dance. At this sight, Edwin seized the little hand of Moraig ; while Lord Andrew called a pretty lass from amongst the rustics, and joined the group. The happy Earl, with many a hearty laugh, enjoyed the jollity of his people ; and while the steward stood at his lord's back, describing whose sons and daughters passed before him in the reel, Mar remembered their parents ; their fathers, once his companions in the chace, or on the wave ; and their mothers, the pretty maidens he used to pursue over the hills in the merry time of shealing.*

Lady Mar watched the countenance of Wallace, as he looked upon the joyous group : it was placid, and a soft complacency illumined his eye. — How different was the expression in hers, had he marked it ! All within her, was in tumults ; and the characters were but too legibly imprinted on her face. But he did not look on her ; for the child, whom the perfume of the flowers overpowered, began to cry. He rose, and, having resigned it to the nurse, turned into a narrow vista of trees, where he walked slowly on, unconscious whither he went.

* *Shealing*, the festival of the shepherds, when they went into the mountains, at a certain time of the year, to feed their flocks.

Lady Mar, with an eager, though almost aimless haste, followed him, with a light step, till she saw him turn out of the vista; and then she lost sight of him. To walk with him, undisturbed, in so deep a seclusion; to improve the impression, which, she was sure, she had made upon his heart; to teach him to forget his Marion, in the hope of one day possessing her! All these thoughts ran in this vain woman's head:—and, inwardly rejoicing, that the shattered health of her husband, promised her a ready freedom to become the wife of the man, to whom she would gladly belong, in honour or in dishonour; she hastened forward as if the accomplishment of her wishes depended on this meeting. Peeping through the trees, she saw him standing with folded arms, looking intently into the bosom of a large lake; but the place was so thickly surrounded with willows, she could only perceive him at intervals, when the wind tossed aside the branches.

Having stood for some time, he walked on. Several times she essayed to emerge and join him; but a sudden awe of him, a conviction of that saintly purity, which would shrink from the guilty vows she was meditating to pour into his ear: a recollection of the ejaculation, with which he had accosted her before—hovering figure, when she haunted his footsteps on the banks of the Cart: these thoughts made her pause. He might again mistake her for the same dear object!—This image, it was not her interest to recall. And to approach him near, to unveil her heart to him, and to be repulsed,—there was madness in the idea, and she retreated.

She had no sooner returned to the scene of festivity, than she repented having allowed what she deemed an idle alarm of overstrained delicacy, to drive her from the lake.—She would have hastened back, had not two or three aged female peasants almost instantly engaged her, in spite of her struggles for extrication, to listen to long stories respecting her lord's youth. She remained thus an unwilling auditor, and by the side of the dancers, for nearly an hour, before Wallace re-appeared. But then she sprang towards him, as if a spell were broken. "Where, truant, have you been?"

“ In a beautiful solitude,” returned he, “ amongst a luxuriant grove of willows.”

“ Ay !” cried she, “ it is called Glenshealeach* ; and a sad scene was acted there !— About ten years ago, a lady of this island drowned herself in the lake they hang over, because the man she loved— despised her.”

“ Unhappy woman !” observed Wallace.

“ Then you would have pitied her ?” rejoined Lady Mar.

“ He cannot be a man, that would not pity a woman, under such circumstances.”

“ Then *you* would not have consigned her to such a fate ?”

Wallace was startled by the peculiar tone in which this simple question was asked. — It recalled the action in the citadel ; and, unconsciously turning a penetrating look on her, his eyes met hers. He need not have heard farther to have learnt more. She hastily looked down, and coloured ; and he, wishing to misunderstand a language so disgraceful to herself, so dishonouring to her husband, gave some trifling answer ; then making a slight observation about the Earl, he advanced to him. Lord Mar was become tired with so gala a scene ; and, taking the arm of Wallace, they returned together into the house.

Edwin soon followed with Murray ; gladly arriving time enough, to see their little pinnacle draw up under the castle, and throw out her moorings. The Countess, too, descried its streamers ; and hastening into the room, where she knew the chiefs were yet assembled, though the wearied Earl had retired to repose, enquired the reason of that boat having drawn so near the castle.

“ That it may take us from it, fair aunt,” replied Murray.

The Countess fixed her eyes, with an unequivocal expression, upon Wallace. — “ My gratitude is ever due to your kindness, my dear madam,” said he, still wishing to be blind, to what he could not but perceive ; “ and that we may ever deserve it, we go to keep the enemy from your doors.”

“ Yes,” added Murray, “ and to keep a more insidious foe from our own ! Edwin, and I, feel it rather dangerous to bask too long in these sunny bowers.”

* *Glenshealeach* means valley of willows.

“ But, surely, your chief is not afraid !” said she, casting a soft glance at Wallace. — “ Yet, nevertheless, I must fly,” returned he, bowing to her.

“ That you positively shall not,” added she, with a fluttering joy at her heart ; thinking she was about to succeed ; — “ you stir not this night, else I shall brand you all as a band of cowards.”

“ Call us by every name in the poltroon’s calendar,” cried Murray, seeing by the countenance of Wallace that his resolution was not to be moved ; “ yet I must gallop off from your black-eyed Judith, as if chased by the ghost of Holofernes himself.” — “ So, dear aunt,” rejoined Edwin, smiling, “ if you do not mean to play Circe, to our Ulysses, give us leave to go !” Lady Mar started, confused, she knew not how, as he innocently uttered these words. The animated boy snatched a kiss from her hand, when he ceased speaking, and darted after Murray, who had disappeared, to give some speedy directions respecting the boat.

Left thus alone with the object of her every wish, in the moment when she thought she was going to lose him perhaps for ever, she forgot all prudence, all reserve ; and laying her hand on his arm, as with a respectful bow he was also moving away, she arrested his steps. She held him fast ; but agitation preventing her speaking, she trembled violently ; and, weeping, dropped her head upon his shoulder. — He was motionless. — Her tears redoubled. — He felt the embarrassment of his situation ; and at last extricating his tongue, which surprise, and shame for her, had chained, in a gentle voice, he enquired the cause of her uneasiness. — “ If for the safeties of your nephews —”

“ No, no,” cried she, interrupting him ; “ read my fate, in that of the lady of Glenshealeach !”

Again he was silent ; astonished, fearful of too promptly understanding so disgraceful a truth, he found no words in which to answer her, and her emotions became so uncontrolled, that he expected she would swoon in his arms.

“ Cruel, cruel Wallace !” at last cried she, clinging to him ; for he had once or twice attempted to disengage himself, and reseate her on the bench ; “ your heart is

steeled, or it would understand mine. It would at least pity the wretchedness it has created. But I am despised, — and I can yet find the watery grave, from which you rescued me.”

To dissemble longer, would have been folly. Wallace, now resolutely seating her, though with gentleness, addressed her :—“ Your husband, Lady Mar, is my friend : had I even a heart to give to woman, not one sigh should arise in it, to his dishonour. But I am lost to all warmer affections, than that of friendship. I may regard man as my brother, woman as my sister ; but never more can I look on female form with love.”

Lady Mar’s tears now flowed in a more tempered current.

“ But were it otherwise,” cried she, “ only tell me, that had I not been bound with chains, which my kinsmen forced upon me ; had I not been made the property of a man, who, however estimable, was of too paternal years for me to love ; ah ! tell me, if these tears should now flow in vain ? ”

Wallace seemed to hesitate what to answer.

Wrought up to agony, she threw herself on his breast, exclaiming, “ Answer ! but drive me not to despair.—I never loved man before—and now to be scorned ?—Oh, kill me, too dear Wallace, but tell me not that you never could have loved me.”

Wallace was alarmed at her vehemence. “ Lady Mar,” returned he, “ I am incapable of saying any thing to you, that is inimical to your duty to the best of men. I will even forget this distressing conversation ; and continue, through life, to revere, equal with himself, the wife of my friend.”

“ And I am to be stabbed with this ? ” replied she, in a voice of indignant anguish.

“ You are to be healed with it, Lady Mar,” returned he ; “ for it is not a man, like the rest of his sex, that now addresses you, but a being whose heart is petrified to marble. I could feel no throb of yours ; I should be insensible to all your charms, were I even vile enough to see no evil in trampling upon your husband’s rights. Yes, were virtue lost to me, still memory would speak ; still

would she urge, that the chaste, and last kiss, imprinted by my wife on these lips, should live there, in unblemished sanctity, till I again meet her angel embraces in the world to come !”

The Countess, awed by his solemnity, but not put from her suit, exclaimed, “ What she was I would be to thee — thy consoler, thine adorer. Time may set me free. Oh ! till then, only give me leave to love thee, and I shall be happy !”

“ You dishonour yourself, lady,” returned he, “ by these petitions ; and for what ? You plunge your soul in guilty wishes — you sacrifice your peace and your self-esteem to a phantom ; for, I repeat, I am dead to woman, and the voice of love sounds like the funeral knell of her who will never breathe it to me again.” He rose as he spoke ; and the Countess, pierced to the heart, and almost despairing of now retaining any part of his esteem, was devising what next to say, when Murray came into the room.

Wallace instantly observed that his countenance was troubled. “ What has happened ?” enquired he.

“ A messenger from the main land, with bad news from Ayr.”

“ Of private or public import ?” rejoined Wallace.

“ Of both. There has been a horrid massacre, in which the heads of many noble families have fallen.” As he spoke, the paleness of his countenance, revealed to his friend that part of the information, he had found himself unable to communicate.

“ I comprehend my loss,” cried Wallace : “ Sir Ronald Crawford is slain. Bring the messenger in.”

Murray withdrew ; and Wallace, seating himself, remained with a fixed and stern countenance, gazing on the ground. Lady Mar durst not breathe, for fear of disturbing the horrid stillness which seemed to lock up his grief and indignation.

Lord Andrew re-entered with a stranger. Wallace rose to meet him ; and seeing Lady Mar, “ Countess,” said he, “ these bloody recitals are not for your ears ;” and waving her to withdraw, she left the room.

“ This gallant stranger,” said Murray, “ is Sir John

Graham. He has just left that new theatre of Southron perfidy."

"I have hastened hither," cried the knight, "to call your victorious arm to take a signal vengeance on the murderers of your grandfather. He, and eighteen other Scottish chiefs, have been treacherously put to death in the Barns of Ayr."*

Graham then gave a brief narration of the direful circumstance. He and his father, Lord Dundaff, having crossed the south coast of Scotland in their way homeward, stopped to rest at Ayr. They arrived there the very day that Lord Aymer de Valence had entered it, a fugitive from Dumbarton castle. Much as that earl wished to keep the success of Wallace a secret from the inhabitants of Ayr, he found it impossible. Two or three fugitive soldiers whispered the hard fighting they had endured; and, in half an hour after the arrival of the English earl, every soul knew that the recovery of Scotland was begun. Elated with this intelligence, the Scots went, under night, from house to house, congratulating each other on so miraculous an interference in their favour; and many stole to Sir Ronald Crawford, to felicitate the venerable knight on his glorious grandson. The good old man listened with meek joy to their animated eulogiums on Wallace; and when Lord Dundaff, in offering his congratulations with the rest, said, "But while all Scotland lay in vassalage, where did he imbibe this spirit to tread down tyrants?" The venerable patriarch replied, "He was always a noble boy. In infancy, he became the defender of every child he saw oppressed by boys of greater power; he was even the champion of the brute creation, and no poor animal was ever attempted to be tortured near him. The old looked on him for comfort, the young for protection. From infancy to manhood, he has been a benefactor; and though the cruelty of our enemies have widowed his youthful years — though he should go childless to the grave, the brightness of his virtues will spread more glories round the name of Wallace than a thou-

* The *Barns* of Ayr, were the barracks (or palace) built in that town by King Edward, for the occasional residence of his viceroy the Lord Warden.

sand posterities." Other ears than those of Dundaff heard this honest exultation.

The next morning, this venerable old man, and other chiefs of similar consequence, were summoned by Sir Richard Arnulf, the governor, to his palace; there to deliver in, a schedule of their estates; "that quiet possession," the governor said, "might be granted to them, under the great seal of Lord Aymer de Valence, the deputy-warden of Scotland."

The grey-headed knight, not being so active as his compeers of more juvenile years, happened to be the last who went to this tiger's den. Wrapped in a tartan plaid, his silver hair covered with a blue bonnet, and leaning on his staff, he was walking along, attended by two domestics, when Sir John Graham met him at the gate of the palace. He smiled on him, as he passed, and whispered — "It will not be long before my Wallace makes even the forms of vassalage unnecessary; and, then, these failing limbs may sit undisturbed at home, under the fig-tree, and vine, of his planting!"

"God grant it!" returned Graham; and he saw Sir Ronald admitted within the interior gate. The servants were ordered to remain without. Sir John walked there some time, expecting the re-appearance of the knight, whom he intended to assist in leading home; but after an hour, finding no signs of regress from the palace, and thinking his father might be wondering at his delay, he turned his steps towards his own lodgings. While passing along, he met several Southron detachments hurrying across the streets. In the midst of some of these companies, he saw one or two Scottish men of rank, strangers to him, but who, by certain indications, seemed to be prisoners. — He did not go far, before he met a chieftain, in these painful circumstances, whom he knew; but as he was hastening towards him, the noble Scot raised his manacled hand, and turned away his head. This was a warning to the young knight, who darted into an obscure alley, which led to the gardens of his father's lodgings; and was hurrying forward, when he met one of Lord Dundaff's men running in quest of him.

Panting with haste, he informed him, that a party of armed men had come, under De Valence's warrant, to seize Lord Dundaff, and take him to prison ; to lie there with others, who were charged with having taken part in a conspiracy with the grandfather of the insurgent Wallace.

The officer of the band who took Lord Dundaff, told him in the most insulting language, that " Sir Ronald, his ringleader, with eighteen nobles his accomplices, had already suffered the punishment of their crime, and were lying, headless trunks, in the judgment hall."

" Haste, therefore," repeated the man ; " haste to Sir William Wallace ; and require his hand, to avenge his kinsman's blood, and to free his countrymen from prison ! These are your father's commands : he directed me to seek you out, and to give them to you."

Alarmed for the life of his father, Graham hesitated how to act. To leave him, seemed to be abandoning him to the death the others had received ; and yet, only by obeying him, could he have any hopes of averting his threatened fate. Once seeing the path he ought to pursue, he struck immediately into it ; and giving his signet to the man, to assure Lord Dundaff of his obedience, he mounted a horse, which his faithful clansman had brought to the town end ; and setting off full speed, allowed nothing to stay him, till he reached Dumbarton castle. There, hearing that Wallace was gone to Bute, he threw himself into a boat, and plying every oar, reached that island in a shorter space of time than the voyage had ever before been completed.

Being now brought into the presence of the chief, he narrated his dismal tale with a simplicity and pathos, which would have instantly drawn the retributive sword of Wallace, had he had no kinsman to avenge, no friend to release from the Southron dungeons. But as the case stood, his bleeding grandfather lay before his eyes ; and the axe hung over the heads of the most virtuous nobles of his country.

He heard the chieftain to an end, without speaking, or altering the fixed determination of his countenance. But at the close, with an augmented suffusion of blood in his

face, and his brows denouncing some tremendous fate, he rose: — “ Sir John Graham,” said he, “ I attend you.”

“ Whither?” demanded Murray.

“ To Ayr,” answered Wallace; “ this moment I will set out for Dumbarton, to bring away the sinews of my strength; and then this arm shall show, how I loved that good old man.”

“ Your men,” interrupted Graham, “ are already awaiting you on the opposite shore. I presumed to command for you: for on entering Dumbarton, and finding you were absent, after having briefly recounted my errand to Lord Lennox; I dared to interpret your mind, and to order Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, and Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, with all your own force, to follow me to the coast of Renfrew.”

“ Thank you, my friend!” cried Wallace, grasping his hand; “ may I ever have such interpreters!—I cannot stay to bid your uncle farewell,” said he to Lord Andrew: “ remain, and tell him to bless me with his prayers; and then, dear Murray, follow me to Ayr.”

Ignorant of what the stranger had imparted, at the sight of the chiefs approaching from the castle gate, Edwin hastened with the news, that all was ready for embarkation. He was hurrying out his information, when the altered countenance of his general checked him. He looked at the stranger; his features were agitated and severe. He turned towards his cousin; all there was grave and distressed. Again he glanced at Wallace; no word was spoken, but every look threatened; and Edwin saw him leap into the boat, followed by the stranger. The astonished boy, though unnoticed, would not be left behind, and stepping in also, sat down beside his chief.

“ I shall follow you in an hour,” exclaimed Murray. The seamen pushed off; then giving loose to their swelling sail, in less than five minutes the light vessel was wafted out of the little harbour, and turning a point—those in the castle, saw it no more.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BARNs OF AYR.

WHILE the little bark bounded over the waves towards the main land, the poor pilgrims of earth who were its freightage, with heavy hearts, bent towards each other, intent on the further information they were to receive.

“ Here is a list of the murdered chiefs ; and of those who are in the dungeons, expecting the like treatment,” continued Graham, holding out a parchment ; “ it was given to me by my faithful servant.” Wallace took it, but seeing his grandfather’s name at the top, he could look no further : closing the scroll, “ Gallant Graham,” said he, “ I want no stimulus, to urge me to the extirpation I meditate. If God bless my arms, not one perpetrator of this horrid massacre shall be alive to-morrow, to repeat the deed.”

“ What massacre ?” Edwin ventured to enquire. Wallace put the parchment into his hand. Edwin opened the roll, and on seeing the words, “ A List of the Scottish Chiefs murdered on the 18th of June, 1297, in the Judgment Hall of the English Barons at Ayr,” his cheek, rendered pale by the suspense of his mind, now reddened with the hue of indignation : but when, immediately afterwards, the venerated name of his general’s grandfather met his sight, his horror-struck eye sought the face of Wallace : it was dark as before ; and he was now in earnest discourse with Graham.

Forbearing to interrupt him, Edwin continued to read over the blood-registered names.* In turning the page, his eye glanced to the opposite side ; and he saw, at the head of “ A List of Prisoners in the Dungeons of Ayr,” the name of “ Lord Dundaff,” and immediately after it, that of “ Lord Ruthven !” He uttered a piercing cry ; and extending his arms to Wallace, who turned round at so unusual a sound, the terror-struck boy exclaimed, “ My

* Many of the first names in Scotland fill the list which the poet Harrie gives of this horrid massacre.

father is in their hands! — Oh! if you are indeed my brother, fly to Ayr, and save him!”

Wallace took up the open list, which Edwin had dropped: he saw the name of Lord Ruthven, amongst the prisoners; and folding his arms round this affectionate son, “Compose yourself,” said he; “it is to Ayr I am going: and if the God of justice be my speed, your father, and Lord Dundaff, shall not see another day in prison.”

Edwin threw himself on the neck of his friend: “My benefactor!” was all he could utter. Wallace pressed him silently to his bosom.

“Who is this amiable youth?” enquired Graham; “to which of the noble companions of my captive father is he son?”

“To William Ruthven*,” answered Wallace; “the valiant Lord of the Carse of Gowrie. And it is a noble scion, from that glorious root. He it was, that enabled me to win Dunbarton. — Look up, my brother!” cried Wallace, trying to regain so tender a mind, from the paralysing terrors which had seized it: “Look up, and hear me recount the first fruits of your maiden arms, to our gallant friend!”

Covered with blushes, arising from anxious emotion, as well as from a happy consciousness of having won the praises of his general, Edwin rose from his breast, and bowing to Sir John, still leaned his head upon the shoulder of Wallace. That amiable being, who, when seeking to wipe the tear of affliction from the cheek of others, minded not the drops of blood which were distilling in secret from his own heart, began the recital of his first acquaintance with his young Sir Edwin. He enumerated every particular;—his bringing the detachment from Bothwell, through the enemy-encircled mountains, to Glenfinlass; his scaling the walls of Dunbarton, to make the way

* This William Ruthven, Baron of Ruthven on the Spey, and Lord of the Castle of Hunting-tower, which stands on the Tay, two miles from Perth, was the ancestor of the Earls of Gowrie, and of the renowned Ruthven, Earl of Forth and Brentford, who so greatly signalised himself in the armies of Gustavus Adolphus. William Lord Ruthven, who with his family were the fast friends of Wallace, performed services to Scotland more numerous than the disposition of these volumes affords room to recount. And, to pay this tribute to the memory of the ancestors of two brave brothers, right worthy of their origin, — once the dearest friends of the family of the writer, and now in a better world, — embalms the tear, that time can never dry.

smooth for the Scots to ascend ; and his after prowess in that well defended fortress. As Wallace proceeded, the wonder of Graham was raised to a pitch, only to be equalled by his admiration ; and taking the hand of Edwin, " Receive me, brave youth," said he, " as your second brother ; Sir William Wallace is your first ; but, this night, we shall fight side by side for our fathers ; and let that be our bond of kindred !"

Edwin pressed the young chief's cheek, with his innocent lips : " Let us, together, free them," cried he ; " and then we shall be born twins in happiness."

" So be it," cried Graham ; " and Sir William Wallace, be the sponsor of that hour !"

Wallace smiled on them ; and turning his head towards the shore, when the vessel doubled a certain point, he saw the beach covered with armed men. To be sure they were his own, he drew his sword, and waved it in the air. At that moment, a hundred falchions flashed in the sunbeams, and the shout of " Wallace !" came loudly on the breeze.

Graham and Edwin started on their feet ; the seamen plied their oars ; the boat dashed into the breakers—and Wallace, leaping on shore, was received with acclamations by his eager soldiers.

He no sooner landed, than he commenced his march. Murray joined him on the banks of the Irwin ; and as Ayr was no very great distance from that river, at two hours before midnight the little army entered Laglane wood ; where they halted, while Wallace with his friends proceeded to reconnoitre the town. The wind swept in gusts through the trees, and seemed, by its dismal yellings, to utter warnings of the dreadful retributions he was about to perform. He had already declared his plan of destruction : and Graham, as a first measure, went to the spot he had fixed on with Macdougall, his servant, as a place of rendezvous. He returned with the man ; who informed Wallace, that in honour of the sequestered lands of the murdered chiefs having been that day partitioned by De Valence amongst certain Southron lords, a grand feast was

now held in the governor's palace. Under the very roof where they had shed the blood of the trusting Scots, they were now keeping this carousal!

"Now, then, is our time to strike!" cried Wallace; and, ordering detachments of his men to take possession of the avenues to the town, he set forth with others, to reach the front of the castle gates, by a less frequented path than the main street. The darkness being so great, that no object could be distinctly seen, they had not gone far, before Macdougall, who had undertaken to be their guide, discovered, by the projection of a hill on the right, that he had lost the road.

"Our swords will find one," exclaimed Kirkpatrick.

Unwilling to lose any advantage, in a situation where so much was at stake, Wallace gladly hailed a twinkling light, which gleamed from what he supposed the window of a distant cottage. Kirkpatrick, with Macdougall, offered to go forward, and explore the way. In a few minutes they arrived at a thatched building; from which, to their surprise, issued the wailing strains of the coronach.* Kirkpatrick paused. Its melancholy notes were sung by female voices. Hence, there being no danger in applying to such harmless inhabitants, to learn the way to the citadel, he proceeded to the door; when, intending to knock, the weight of his mailed arm burst open its slender latch and discovered two poor women, in an inner apartment, wringing their hands over a shrouded corse. While the chief entered, his friends came up. Murray and Graham, struck with sounds never breathed over the vulgar dead, lingered at the door, wondering what noble Scot could be the subject of lamentation in so lowly an abode. The stopping of these two chieftains impeded the steps of Wallace; who was pressing forward, without eye or ear for any thing but the object of his march. Kirkpatrick, at that moment, appeared on the threshold, and, without a word, putting forth his hand, seized the arm of his commander, and pulled him into the cottage. Before Wallace could ask the reason of this, he saw a woman run forward with a light in her hand; the beams of which falling on the face of the knight

* *Coronach*, a national dirge sung over the body of a dead chief.

of Ellerslie, with a shriek of joy she rushed towards him, and threw herself upon his neck.

He instantly recognised Elspa, his nurse; the faithful attendant on his grandfather's declining years, the happy matron who had decked the bridal bed of his Marion; and, with an anguish of recollections that almost unmanned him, he returned her affectionate embrace.

"Here he lies!" cried the old woman, drawing him towards the rushy bier; and before he had time to demand, "Who?" she pulled down the shroud, and disclosed the body of Sir Ronald Crawford. Wallace gazed on it, with a look of such dreadful import, that Edwin, whose anxious eyes then sought his countenance, trembled with a nameless horror. "Oh," thought he, "to what is this noble soul reserved! Is he alone doomed to extirpate the enemies of Scotland, that every ill falls direct upon his head!"

"Sorry, sorry bier, for the good Lord Ronald!" cried the old woman; "a poor wake* to mourn the loss of him, who was the benefactor of all the country round! But had I not brought him here, the salt sea must have been his grave." Here sobs prevented her utterance; but after a short pause — with many vehement lamentations over the virtues of the dead, and imprecations on his murderers, she related, that as soon as the woeful tidings were brought to Monkton kirk, (and brought too by the Southron who was to take it in possession!) she and the Scots, who would not swear fidelity to the new lord, were driven from the house. She hastened to the bloody theatre of massacre; and there beheld the bodies of the murdered chiefs, drawn on sledges to the sea-shore. Elspa knew that of her master, by a scar on his breast, which he had received in the battle of Largs. When she saw corse, after corse, thrown, with a careless hand, into the waves; and the man approached who was to cast the honoured chief of Monkton, to the same unhallowed burial, she threw herself frantically on the body; and so moved the man's compassion, that, taking advantage of the time when his comrades were out of sight, he permitted her to wrap the dead Sir

* *Wake* is a ceremony still used by the friends of the dead, in the highlands of Scotland. They sit up with the body to lament over it; and during their time of mourning, regale themselves with sumptuous feasts.

Ronald in her plaid, and so carry him away between her sister and herself. But ere she had raised her sacred burden, he directed her to seek the venerable head from amongst the others, which lay mingled in a sack ; drawing it forth, she placed it beside the body ; and then hastily retired with both, to the hovel where Wallace had found her. It was a shepherd's hut ; and the desolation of the times, having long ago driven away its former inhabitant, she had hoped that in so lonely an obscurity, she might have performed, without notice, a chieftain's rites, to the remains of the murdered lord of the very lands on which she wept him. These over, she meant he should be interred in secret by the fathers of a neighbouring church, which he had once richly endowed. With these intentions, she and her sister were chanting over him the sad dirge of their country, when Sir Roger Kirkpatrick burst open the door. " Ah ! " cried she, as she closed her dismal narrative ; " though two lonely women, were all they had left of the lately thronged household of Sir Ronald Crawford, to raise the last lament over his revered body ; yet in that sad midnight hour, our earthly voices were not alone ; the wakeful spirits of his daughters hovered in the air, and joined the deep coronach ! "

Wallace sighed heavily, as he looked on the animated face of the aged mourner. Attachment to the venerable dead, seemed to have inspired her with thoughts beyond her station ; but the heart is an able teacher, and he saw that true affection speaks but one language.

As her ardent eyes withdrew from their heaven-ward gaze, they fell upon the shrouded face of her master. A napkin concealed the wound of decapitation. " Chiefs," cried she, in a burst of recollection ; " ye have not seen all the cruelty of these murderers ! " At these words she suddenly withdrew the linen, and lifting up the pale head, held it wofully towards Wallace : " Here," cried she, " once more kiss these lips ! They have often kissed yours, when you were a babe, and as insensible to his love, as he is now to your sorrow. "

Wallace received the head in his arms ; the long silver beard, thick with gouts of blood, hung over his hands.

He gazed on it, intently, for some minutes. An awful silence pervaded the room : every eye was rivetted upon him.

Looking round on his friends, with a countenance, whose deadly hue gave a sepulchral fire to the gloomy denunciation of his eyes ; “ Was it necessary,” said he, “ to turn my heart to iron, that I was brought to see this sight ? ” All the tremendous purpose of his soul was read in his face, while he laid the head back upon the bier. His lips again moved, but none heard what he said. He rushed from the hut ; and, with rapid strides, proceeded in profound silence towards the palace.*

He well knew that no honest Scot could be under that roof. The building, though magnificent, was altogether a structure of wood ; to fire it, then, was his determination. To destroy all, at once, in the theatre of their cruelty ; to make an execution ; not engage in a warfare of man to man, was his resolution : for they were not soldiers, he was seeking, but assassins : and to pitch his brave Scots in the open field, against such unmanly wretches, would be to dishonour his men ; to give criminals, a chance for the lives they had forfeited.

All being quiet in the few streets through which he passed, and having set strong bodies of men at the mouth of every sally-port of the citadel, he made a bold attack upon the guard at the barbican gate ; and, ere they could give the alarm, all being slain, he and his chosen troop entered the portal, and made direct to the palace. The lights which blazed through the windows of the banqueting hall showed him to the spot ; and, having detached Graham and Edwin to storm the keep where their fathers were confined, he took the half-intoxicated sentinels at the palace gates by surprise, and striking them into a sleep from which they would wake no more, he fastened the doors upon the assassins. His men surrounded the building with hurdles, filled with combustibles, which they had prepared according to his directions ; and, when all was ready, Wal-

* The parallel scene to this, in blind Harrie's poem, is yet more horribly described : its painting might have been too strong for a work of this kind ; but the simple and pathetic lamentations of the nurse in the old poem, are not to be equalled by any copy in modern prose.

lace, with the mighty spirit of retribution nerving every limb, mounted to the roof, and tearing off the shingles, with a flaming brand in his hand, showed himself to the affrighted revellers beneath; and, as he threw it blazing amongst them, he cried aloud, "The blood of the murdered calls for vengeance, and it comes."

At that instant, the matches were put to the faggots which surrounded the building; and the party within, springing from their seats, hastened towards the doors. All were fastened on them; and, retreating into the midst of the room, they fearfully looked towards the tremendous figure above, which, like a supernatural being, seemed indeed come to rain fire upon their guilty heads. Some shook with superstitious dread; others, driven to atheistical despair, with horrible execrations, again strove to force a passage through the doors. A second glance told De Valence whose was the hand which had launched the thunderbolt at his feet; and, turning to Sir Richard Arnulf, he cried, in a voice of horror, "My arch-enemy is there!"

Thick smoke, rising from within and without the building, now obscured his terrific form. The shouts of the Scots, as the fire covered its walls, and the streaming flames, licking the windows, and pouring into every opening of the building, raised such a terror in the breasts of the wretches within, that, with the most horrible cries, they, again and again, flew to the doors to escape. Not an avenue appeared: almost suffocated with smoke, and scorched by the blazing rafters which fell from the burning roof, they at last made a desperate attempt to break a passage through the great portal. Arnulf was at their head; and sunk to abjectness by his despair, in a voice which terror rendered piercing, he called aloud for mercy. The words reached the ear of Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who stood nearest to the door: in a voice of thunder he replied, "That ye gave ye shall receive. Where was mercy, when our fathers and our brothers fell beneath your swords?"

Aymer De Valence came up, at this moment, with a wooden pillar, which he and the strongest men in the company had torn from under the gallery that surrounded the room; and, with all their strength, dashing it against the

door, they at last drove it from its bolts. But now a wall of men opposed them. Desperate at the sight, and with a burning furnace in their rear, it was not the might of man that could prevent their escape ; and, with the determination of despair, rushing forward, the foremost rank of the Scots fell. But ere the exulting Southrons could press out into the open space, Wallace himself had closed upon them ; and Arnulf, the merciless Arnulf, whose voice had pronounced the sentence of death upon Sir Ronald Crawford, died beneath his hand.

Wallace was not aware that he had killed the governor of Ayr, till the terror-struck exclamations of his enemies informed him that the ruthless instigator of the massacre was slain. This event was welcome news to the Scots ; and, hoping that the next death would be that of De Valence, they pressed on with redoubled energy.

Aroused by so extraordinary a noise, and alarmed by the flames of the palace, the soldiers of the garrison hastened, half-armed, to the spot. But their presence rather added to the confusion than gave assistance to the besieged. The men were without leaders ; and not daring to put themselves in action, for fear of being afterwards punished (in the case of a mischance) for having presumed to move without their officers, they stood dismayed and irresolute ; while those very officers, who had been all at the banquet, were falling, in heaps, under the swords of the exterminating Scots.

Meanwhile the men who guarded the prisoners in the keep, having their commanders with them, made a stout resistance. One of the officers, seeing a possible advantage, stole out ; and, gathering a few companies of the scattered garrison, suddenly taking Graham in flank, made no inconsiderable havoc amongst that part of his division. Edwin blew the signal for assistance. Wallace heard the blast ; and seeing the day was won at the palace, he left the finishing of the affair to Kirkpatrick and Murray ; and, drawing off a small party to reinforce Graham, he took the Southron officer by surprise. The enemy's ranks fell around him, like corn beneath the sickle ; and grasping a huge battering-ram which his men had found, he burst open the door of the

keep. Graham and Edwin rushed in ; and Wallace, sounding his own bugle with the notes of victory, his reserves (whom he had placed at the ends of the streets) entered in every direction, and received the flying soldiers of De Valence upon their pikes.

Dreadful was now the carnage ; for the Southrons, forgetting all discipline, fought every man for his life ; while the furious Scots, driving them into the far-spreading flames, what escaped the sword would have perished in the fire, had not the relenting heart of Wallace pleaded for bleeding humanity, and he ordered the trumpet to sound a parley. He was obeyed ; and, standing on an adjacent mound, in an awful voice he proclaimed, that " whoever had not been accomplices in the horrible massacre of the Scottish chiefs, if they would ground their arms, and take an oath never to serve again against Scotland, their lives should be spared."

Hundreds of swords fell to the ground ; and their late holders, kneeling at his feet, took the oath prescribed. At the head of those who surrendered, appeared the captain who had commanded at the prison. He was the only officer of all the late garrison who survived : all else had fallen in the conflict, or perished in the flames ; and when he saw that not one of his late numerous companions existed to go through the same humiliating ceremony, with an aghast countenance he said to Wallace, as he presented his sword, " Then I must believe that, with this weapon, I am surrendering to Sir William Wallace the possession of this castle and the government of Ayr. I see not one of my late commanders — all must be slain ; and for me to hold out longer, would be to sacrifice my men, not to redeem that which has been so completely wrested from us. But I serve severe exactors ; and I hope that your testimony, my conqueror, will assure my king I fought as became his standard." *

* The narrator of this terrible event would be stripping herself of one of the brightest leaves in the evergreen wreath which the beloved " land of the holly " has given to her, did she deny herself the pleasure of expressing, here, to Mrs. Joanna Baillic, her just appreciation of that lady's honouring opinion on the above described scene. — She, whom so many countries have united in recognising as the true dramatic " sister of Shakspeare," has said — that Miss Porter's account, in her " Scottish Chiefs," of the burning of the Barns of Ayr, and of

Wallace gave him a gracious answer ; and committing him to the generous care of Murray, he turned, to give orders to Ker, respecting the surrendered, and the slain. During these momentous events Graham had deemed it prudent that, exhausted by anxiety and privations, the noble captives should not come forth to join in the battle ; and not until the sound of victory echoed through the arches of their dungeons, would he suffer the eager Dundaff to see and thank his deliverer. Meanwhile, the young Edwin appeared before the eyes of his father, like the angel who opened the prison-gates to Peter. After embracing him with all a son's fondness ; in which for the moment he lost the repressing idea, that he might have offended by his truancy ; after recounting, in a few hasty sentences, the events which had brought him to be a companion of Sir William Wallace, and to avenge the injuries of Scotland, in Ayr, he knocked off the chains of his amazed father. Eager to perform the like service to all who had suffered in the like manner, accompanied by the happy Lord Ruthven, (who gazed with delight on his son, treading so early the path of glory,) he hastened around to the other dungeons ; and gladly proclaimed to the astonished inmates, freedom and safety. Having rid them of their shackles, he had just entered, with his noble company, into the vaulted chamber which contained the released Lord Dundaff, when the peaceful clarion sounded. At the joyful tidings Graham started on his feet : " Now, my father, you shall see the bravest of men ! "

Wallace's appearance in the conflagration, was one of the sublimest descriptions she had ever read. The reader may find her eloquent words on the subject, in a note annexed to a poem, which forms part of Mrs. Joanna Baillie's historical volume of " Metrical Legends."

Sir Walter Scott, too, has not been backward in awarding his invaluable testimony on the merit of this scene, by making it appear as reflected again in one of his works, the beautiful poem of " Rokeby ; " where the adoption of her description of the burning palace of Ayr, and of Sir William Wallace in the flaming rafters, has been often pointed out to the authoress of " The Scottish Chiefs." A spirit for literary foray has so repeatedly been playfully and frankly avowed by him, in different pages of his magic books, that no one need be surprised at such transfers : and, surely, no wandering shepherdess could see a sheep of hers gathered into that mighty wizard's fold, without feeling pride, rather than loss, in the selection !

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BARNES OF AYR.

MORNING was spreading in pale light over the heavens ; and condensing with its cold breath the lurid smoke which still ascended in volumes from the burning ruins ; when Wallace, turning round at the glad voice of Edwin, beheld the released nobles. This was the first time he had ever seen the Lords Dundaff and Ruthven ; but several of the others he remembered having met at the fatal decision of the crown : and, while welcoming to his friendship those to whom his valour had given freedom, how great was his surprise to see, in the person of a prisoner suddenly brought before him, Sir John Monteith, the young chieftain whom he had parted with a few months ago at Douglas ; and from whose fatal invitation to that place, he might date the ruin of his dearest happiness, and all the succeeding catastrophe !

“ We found Sir John Monteith amongst the slain, before the palace,” said Ker ; “ he, of the whole party, alone breathed ; I knew him instantly. How he came there, I know not ; but I have brought him hither, to explain it himself.” Ker withdrew, to finish the interment of the dead. Monteith, still leaning on the soldier, grasped Wallace’s hand : “ My brave friend !” cried he, “ to owe my liberty to you, is a twofold pleasure ; for,” added he, in a lowered voice, “ I see before me, the man who is to verify the words of Baliol ; and be, not only the guardian, but the possessor of the treasure he committed to our care !”

Wallace, who had never cast a thought on the box, since he knew it was under the protection of Saint Fillan, shook his head : — “ A far different meed do I seek, my friend !” said he : “ to behold these happy countenances of my liberated countrymen, is greater reward to me, than would be the developement of all the splendid mysteries which the head of Baliol could devise.”

“ Ay !” cried Dundaff, who overheard this part of the conversation, “ we invited the usurpation of a tyrant, by the docility with which we submitted to his minion. Had

we rejected Baliol, we had never been ridden by Edward. But the rowel has gored the flanks of us all! and who amongst us will not lay himself and fortune at the foot of him who plucks away the tyrant's heel?"

"If all held our cause in the light that you do," returned Wallace, "the blood which these Southrons have sown, would rise up, in ten thousand legions, to overwhelm the murderers!"

"But how," enquired he, turning to Monteith, "did you happen to be in Ayr at this period? and how, above all, amongst the slaughtered Southrons at the palace?"

Sir John Monteith readily replied: "My adverse fate, accounts for all." He then proceeded to inform Wallace, that on the very night in which they parted at Douglas, Sir Arthur Heselrigge was told the story of the box; and accordingly sent to have Monteith brought prisoner to Lanark. He lay in the dungeons of the citadel, at the very time Wallace entered that town, and destroyed the governor. Though the Scots did not pursue the advantage offered by the transient panic in which this retribution threw their enemies, care was immediately taken by the English lieutenant, to prevent a repetition of the same disaster; and, in consequence, every suspected person was seized; and those already in confinement, loaded with chains. Monteith being known as a friend of Wallace, was sent under a strong guard towards Stirling, there to stand his trial before Cressingham, and the English Justiciary Ormsby: "by a lucky chance," said he, "I made my escape; but I was soon retaken by another party, and conveyed to Ayr, where the Lieutenant-governor Arnulf, discovering my talents for music, compelled me to sing at his entertainments. For this purpose he last night confined me in the banqueting-room at the palace; and thus, when the flames surrounded that building, I found myself exposed to die the death of a traitor, though then the most oppressed of all the Scots. Snatching up a sword, and striving to join my brave countrymen, the Southrons impeded my passage, and I fell under their arms."

Happy to have rescued his old acquaintance, from further indignities, Wallace committed him to Edwin to lead into

the citadel. Then taking the colours of Edward from the ground (where the Southron officer had laid them), he gave them to Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, with orders to fill their former station on the citadel, with the standard of Scotland. This action he considered as the seal of each victory; as the beacon which, seen from afar, would show the desolate Scots where to find a protector; and from what ground to start, when courage should prompt them to assert their rights.

The standard was no sooner raised, than the proud clarion of triumph was blown from every warlike instrument in the garrison; and the Southron captain, placing himself at the head of his disarmed troops, under the escort of Murray, marched out of the castle. He announced his design to proceed immediately to Newcastle, and thence embark with his men, to join their king in Flanders. Not more than two hundred followed their officer in this expedition; for not more were English: the rest, to nearly double that number, being, like the garrison of Dumbarton, Irish and Welsh, were glad to escape enforced servitude. Some parted off in divisions to return to their respective countries; while a few, whose energetic spirits preferred a life of warfare, in the cause of a country struggling for freedom, before returning, to submit to the oppressors of their own, enlisted under the banners of Wallace.

Some other necessary regulations being then made, he dismissed his gallant Scots, to find refreshment in the well-stored barracks of the dispersed Southrons; and retired, himself, to join his friends in the citadel.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BERWICK AND THE TWEED.

IN the course of an hour, Murray returned, from having seen the departing Southrons beyond the barriers of the township. But he did not come alone; he was accompanied by Lord Auckinleck, the son of one of the betrayed

barons who had fallen in the palace of Ayr. This young chieftain, at the head of his vassals, hastened to support the man, whose dauntless hand had thus satisfied his revenge ; and when he met Murray at the north gate of the town, and recognised in his flying banners a friend of Scotland, he was happy to make himself known to an officer of Wallace, and to be conducted to that chief.

While Lord Andrew, and his new colleague, were making the range of the suburbs, the glad progress of the victor Scots had turned the whole aspect of that lately gloomy city. Doors and windows, so recently closed in deep mourning, for the sanguinary deeds done in the palace, now opened, teeming with smiling inhabitants. The general joy penetrated to the most remote recesses. Mothers now threw their fond arms around the necks of the children, whom, just before, they had regarded with the averted eyes of despair ; in the one sex, they had then beheld the devoted victims of, perhaps, the next requisition for blood ; and in the other, the hapless prey of passions, more fell than the horrid rage of the beast of the field. But now, all was secure again. These terrific tyrants were driven hence ; and the happy parent, embracing her children, as if restored from the grave, implored a thousand blessings on the head of Wallace, the gifted agent of all this good.

Sons who, in secret, had lamented the treacherous death of their fathers ; and brothers of their brothers ; now opened their gates, and joined the valiant troops in the streets. Widowed wives, and fatherless daughters, almost forgot they had been bereaved of their natural protectors, when they saw Scotland rescued from her enemies ; and her armed sons once more walking in the broad day, masters of themselves, and of their country's liberties.

Thus, then, with every heart rejoicing ; every house teeming with numbers to swell the ranks of Wallace ; did he, the day after he had entered Ayr, see all arranged for its peaceful establishment. But ere he bade that town adieu, in which he had been educated ; and where almost every man, remembering its preserver's boyish years, thronged round him with recollections of former days ; one

duty yet demanded his stay : to pay funeral honours to the remains of his beloved grandfather.

Accordingly, the time was fixed ; and with every solemnity due to his virtues and his rank, Sir Ronald Crawford was buried in the chapel of the citadel. It was not a scene of mere ceremonious mourning. As he had been the father of the fatherless, he was followed to the grave by many an orphan's tears ; and as he had been the protector of the distressed, of every degree ; a procession long, and full of lamentation, conducted his shrouded corse to its earthly rest. The mourning families of the chiefs who had fallen in the same bloody theatre with himself, closed the sad retinue ; and while the holy rites committed his body to the ground, the sacred mass was extended to those who had been plunged into the weltering element.

While Wallace confided the aged Elspa, and her sister, to the care of Sir Reginald Crawford, to whom he also resigned the lands of his grandfather ; "Cousin," said he, "you are a valiant and a humane man ! I leave you to be the representative of your venerable uncle : to cherish these poor women whom he loved ; to be the protector of the people, and the defender of the town. The citadel is under the command of the Baron of Auckinleck ; he, with his brave followers, being the first to hail the burning of the accursed Barns of Ayr."

After this solemnity, and these dispositions, Wallace called a review of his troops ; and found that he could leave five 500 men at Ayr, and march an army of at least 2000 out of it.

His present design was to take his course to Berwick ; and, by seizing every castle of strength in his way, form a chain of works across the country ; which would not only bulwark Scotland against any farther inroads from its enemies, but render the subjugation of the interior Southron garrisons, more certain and easy.

On the third morning after the conflagration of the palace, Wallace quitted Ayr ; and marching over its far-stretching hills, manned every watch-tower on their summits. For now, whithersoever he moved, he found his victories had preceded him ; and all, from hall to hovel,

turned out to greet and offer him their services. Thus, heralded by fame, the panic-struck Southron governors, fled at the distant view of his standards; the flames of Ayr, seemed to menace them all; and castle and fortalice, from Muir-kirk, to the walls of Berwick, opened their gates before him.

Arrived under those blood-stained towers, which had so often been the objects of dispute between the powers of England and of Scotland, he prepared for their immediate attack. Berwick being a valuable fortress to the enemy, not only as a key to the invaded kingdom, but a point whence, by their ships, they commanded the whole of the eastern coast of Scotland; Wallace expected that a desperate stand would be made here to stop the progress of his arms. But being aware, that the most expeditious mode of warfare was the best adapted to promote his cause, he first took the town by assault; and then, having driven the garrison into the citadel, assailed it by a vigorous siege.

After ten days' hard duty before the walls, Wallace devised a plan to obtain possession of the ships which commanded the harbour. He found, among his own troops, many men who had been used to a sea-faring life: these he disguised as fugitive Southrons, and sent in boats to the ships which lay in the roads. The feint took; and by these means seizing upon the vessels nearest to the town, he manned them with his own people, and going out with them himself, in three days made himself master of every ship on the coast.

By this manœuvre, the situation of the besieged was rendered so hopeless, that no mode of escape was left, but by desperate sallies. They made them; but without other effect, than weakening their strength, and increasing their miseries. Wallace was aware of all their resolutions; for knowing what would be best for them to do in their situation, he needed no better spy over their actions than his own judgment.

Foiled in every attempt; as their opponent, guessing their intentions, was prepared at every point to meet their different essays; and losing men at every rencontre, their governor stood without resource. Without provisions,

without aid of any kind for his wounded men ; and hourly annoyed by the victorious Scots, who continued, day and night, to throw showers of arrows, and other missile weapons, from the towers and springalls with which they had overtopped the walls ; the unhappy Earl of Gloucester seemed ready to rush on death, to avoid the disgrace of surrendering the fortress. Every soul in the garrison was reduced to similar despair. Wallace even found means to dam up the spring which had supplied the citadel with water. The common men, famished with hunger, smarting with wounds, and now perishing with unextinguishable thirst, threw themselves at the feet of their officers ; imploring them to represent to their royal governor, that if he held out longer he must defend the place alone ; for they could not exist another day under their present sufferings.

The Earl indeed repented the rashness with which he had thrown himself unprovisioned into the citadel. He now saw that expectation was no apology for want of precaution. When his first division had been overpowered in the assault on the town, his evil genius then suggested that it was best to take the second, unbroken, into the citadel ; and there await the arrival of a reinforcement by sea. But he thence beheld the ships which had defended the harbour, seized by Wallace before his eyes ! Hope was then crushed ; and nothing but death, or dishonour, seemed to be his alternatives. Cut to the soul at the consequences of his want of judgment, he determined to retrieve his fame, by washing out that error with his blood. To fall under the ruins of Berwick castle was his resolution. Such was the state of his mind when the officers appeared with the petition from his men. In proportion as they felt the extremities into which they were driven, the offence he had committed glared with tenfold enormity in his eyes ; and, with wild despair, he told them, “ they might do as they would ; but for his part the moment they opened the gates to the enemy, that moment should be the last of his life. He, that was the son-in-law of King Edward, would never yield his sword to a Scottish rebel.”

Terrified at these threats on himself, the soldiers, who loved their general, declared themselves willing to die with

him ; and, as a last effort, proposed making a mine under the principal tower of the Scots ; and, by setting fire to it, at least destroy the means by which they feared their enemies would storm the citadel.

As Wallace gave his orders from this commanding station, he observed the besieged, passing in numbers behind a mound, in a direction to the tower where he stood : he concluded what was their design ; and ordering a counter-mine to be made ; — what he anticipated happened ; and Murray, at the head of his miners, encountered those of the castle, at the very moment they would have set fire to the combustibles laid to consume the tower. The instant struggle was violent, but short ; for the impetuous Scots drove their amazed and enfeebled adversaries through the aperture into the centre of the citadel. At this crisis, Wallace, with a band of resolute men, sprung, from the tower, upon the walls ; and, while they were almost deserted by their late guardians (who had quitted them to assist in repelling the foe below), he leaped into the midst of the conflict ; and the battle became general. It was decisive ; for beholding the undaunted resolution with which the weakened and dying were supporting the cause their governor was determined to defend to the last, Wallace found his admiration, and his pity, alike excited ; and even while his followers seemed to have each his foe's life in his hands ; when one instant more would make him the undisputed master of the castle (for not a Southron would then breathe to dispute it), he resolved to stop the carnage. At the moment when a gallant officer, who, having assaulted him with the vehemence of despair, now lay disarmed under him ; at that moment, when the discomfited knight exclaimed, “ In mercy strike, and redeem the honour of Ralph de Monthermer !” * Wallace raised his bugle, and sounded the note of peace. Every sword was arrested ; and the universal clangour of battle was hushed in expecting silence.

“ Rise, brave Earl,” cried Wallace, to the governor ; “ I revere virtue, too sincerely, to take an unworthy advantage

! * Ralph de Monthermer, a noble knight, who married Jane of Acre, the daughter of King Edward I. He was created Earl of Gloucester on his marriage with that princess.

of my fortune. The valour of this garrison, commands my respect ; and, as a proof of my sincerity, I grant to it, what I have never yet done to any : That yourself, and these dauntless men, march out with the honours of war ; and without any bonds on your future conduct, towards us. We leave it to your own hearts, to decide, whether you will ever again be made instruments, to enchain a free and brave people."

While he was speaking, De Monthermer leaned gloomily on the sword he had returned to him, with his eyes fixed on his men. They answered his glance, with looks that said, they understood him ; and passing a few words, in whispers to each other, one at last spoke aloud : — " Decide for us, Earl. We are as ready to die, as to live ; so that in neither we may be divided from you."

At this generous declaration, the proud despair of De Monthermer gave way to nobler feelings ; and while a big tear stood in each eye, he turned to Wallace, and stretching out his hand to him ; " Noble Scot," said he, " your unexampled generosity, and the invincible fidelity of these heroic men, have compelled me to accept the life, I had resolved to lose under these walls, rather than resign them. But virtue is resistless : and to it, do I surrender that pride of soul, which made existence insufferable under the consciousness of having erred. When I became the husband of King Edward's daughter, I believed myself pledged to victories, or to death. But there is a conquest, and I feel it, greater than over hosts in the field ; — and here taught to make it, the husband of the Princess of England, the proud Earl of Gloucester, consents to live ; to be a monument of Scottish nobleness, and of the inflexible fidelity of English soldiers."

" You live, illustrious and virtuous Englishmen," returned Wallace, " to redeem that honour, of which the rapacious sons of England had robbed their country. Go forth, therefore, as my conqueror ; for you have, in this spot, extinguished that burning antipathy, with which the outraged heart of William Wallace, had vowed to extirpate every Southron from off this ravaged land. Honour, brave Earl, makes all men brethren ; and, as a brother, I open

these gates for you, to re-pass into your country. When there, if you ever remember William Wallace, let it be as a man, who fights, not for conquest, nor renown ; but to restore Scotland to her rights ; and then to resign his sword in peace."

" I shall remember you, Sir William Wallace !" returned De Monthermer ; " and as a pledge of it, you shall never see me again in this country, till I come an ambassador of that peace for which you fight. But, meanwhile, in the moment of hot contention for the rights, which you believe wrested from you, do you remember, that they have not been so much the spoil of my royal father's ambition, as the traffic of your own venal nobles. Had I not believed that Scotland was unworthy of freedom, I should never have appeared upon her borders : but now that I see she has brave hearts within her, who, not only resist oppression, but know how to wield power, I detest the zeal with which I volunteered to rivet her chains. And I repeat, that never, again, shall my hostile foot impress this land."

These sentiments were answered, in the same spirit by his soldiers. And the Scots, following the example of their leader, treated them with every kindness. After dispensing amongst them provisions, and appointing means to convey the wounded in comfort, Wallace bade a cordial farewell to the Earl of Gloucester ; and his men conducted their reconciled enemies over the Tweed. There they parted. The English bent their course towards London, and the Scots returned to their victorious general.

CHAPTER XXXII.

STIRLING.

THE happy effects of these rapid conquests, were soon apparent. The fall of Berwick excited such a confidence in the minds of the neighbouring chieftains, that every hour brought fresh recruits to Wallace. Every mouth was full of the praises of the young conqueror ; every eye was eager to catch a glimpse of his person ; and, while the men were

emulous to share his glory, the women, in their secret bowers, put up prayers for the preservation of one so handsome, and so brave.

Amongst the many, of every rank and age, who hastened to pay their respects to the deliverer of Berwick, was Sir Richard Maitland of Thirlestane, the *Stalwarth Knight of Lauderdale*.*

Wallace was no sooner told of the approach of the venerable chief, than he set forth to bid him welcome. At sight of the champion of Scotland, Sir Richard threw himself off his horse, with a military grace that might have become even youthful years; and hastening towards Wallace, clasped him in his arms.

“ Let me look on thee !” cried the old knight ; “ let me feast my eyes, on the brave Scot, who again raises this hoary head, so long bent in shame for its dishonoured country !” While he spoke, he viewed Wallace from head to foot. “ I knew Sir Ronald Crawford, and thy valiant father,” continued he : “ O ! had they lived to see this day ! But the base murder of the one, thou hast nobly avenged ; and the honourable grave of the other, on Loudon-hill †, thou wilt cover with a monument of thine own glories. Low are laid my own children, in this land of strife ; but in thee, I see a son of Scotland, that is to dry all our tears.”

He embraced Wallace again and again. And, as the veteran’s overflowing heart rendered him garrulous, he expatiated on the energy with which the young victor had pursued his conquests ; and paralleled them with the brilliant actions he had seen in his youth. While he thus discoursed, Wallace drew him towards the castle, and there presented to him the two nephews of the Earl of Mar.

He paid some warm compliments to Edwin, on his early success in the career of glory ; and then turning to Murray, “ Ay !” said he, “ it is joy to me, to see the valiant house

* Sir Richard Maitland, of the castle of Thirlestane on the Leeder, is noted in Scottish tradition for his bravery. His valiant defence of his castle against the English in his extreme old age, is still the subject of enthusiasm amongst the people of Lauderdale. He was usually called *the Stalwarth auld knight of Lauderdale*, meaning, the *brave old knight*, &c. He had three sons, but one only survived him, who, from that circumstance, was surnamed *burd alane*, which signifies *solitary*.

† Sir Malcolm Wallace, the father of Sir William Wallace, was killed in the year 1295, on Loudon-hill, in a battle with the English.

of Bothwell, in the third generation. Thy grandfather and myself were boys together, at the coronation of Alexander the Second; and that is eighty years ago. Since then, what have I not seen! the death of two noble Scottish kings! our blooming princes, ravished from us by untimely fates! the throne sold to a coward; and, at last, seized by a foreign power! — Then, in my own person! I have been the father of as brave and beauteous a family as ever blessed a parent's eye: — but they are all torn from me. Two of my sons sleep on the plain of Dunbar; my third, my dauntless William, since that fatal day has been kept a prisoner in England. And my daughters, the tender blossoms of my aged years; they grew around me, the fairest lilies of the land: but they too are passed away. The one, scorning the mere charms of youth, and preferring an union with a soul that had long conversed with superior regions, loved the sage of Ercildown. But my friend lost this rose of his bosom, and I the child of my heart, ere she had been a year his wife. Then was my last, and only daughter, married to the Lord Mar; and in giving birth to my dear Isabella, she too died. — Ah, my good young knight, were it not for that sweet child, the living image of her mother, who in the very spring of youth was cropt and fell; I should be alone: — my hoary head would descend to the grave, unwept, unregretted!”

The joy of the old man having recalled such melancholy remembrances, he wept upon the shoulder of Edwin; who had drawn so near, that the story, which was begun to Murray, was ended to him. — To give the mourning father time to recover himself, Wallace was moving away, when he was met by Ker, bringing information that a youth had just arrived in breathless haste from Stirling, with a sealed packet, which he would not deliver into any hands but those of Sir William Wallace. — Wallace requested his friends to show every attention to the Lord of Thirlestane, and then withdrew to meet the messenger.

On his entering the ante-room, the youth sprung forwards; but suddenly checking himself, he stood, as if irresolute what to say.

“ This is Sir William Wallace, young man,” said Ker; “ deliver your embassy.”

At these words, the youth pulled a packet from his bosom, and putting it into the chief's hand, retired in confusion. Wallace gave orders to Ker to take care of him; and then turned to inspect its contents. He wondered from whom it could come; aware of no Scot in Stirling, who would dare to write to him, while that town was possessed by the enemy. But not losing a moment in conjecture, he broke the seal.

How was he startled at the first words! and how was every energy of his heart roused to redoubled action, when he turned to the signature! The first words in the letter were these: —

“ A daughter, trembling for the life of her father, presumes to address Sir William Wallace.” — The signature was “ Helen Mar.” — He began the letter again.

“ A daughter, trembling for the life of her father, presumes to address Sir William Wallace. You have been his deliverer from the sword, from chains, and from the waves. Refuse not to save him again, to whom you have so often given life; and hasten, brave Wallace, to preserve the Earl of Mar from the scaffold.

“ A cruel deception brought him from the isle of Bute; where you imagined you had left him in security. Lord Aymer de Valence, escaping a second time from your sword, fled, under covert of the night, from Ayr to Stirling. Cressingham, the rapacious robber of all our castles, found in him an apt coadjutor. They concerted how to avenge your late successes: and Cressingham, eager to enrich himself, while he flattered the resentments of his commander, suggested that you, Sir William Wallace, our deliverer, and our enemy's scourge, would most easily be made to feel through the bosoms of your friends. These cruel men have therefore determined, by a mock trial, to condemn my father to death: and thus, while they distress you, put themselves in possession of his lands, with the semblance of justice.

“ The substance of this most unrighteous debate, was communicated to me by De Valence himself; thinking to excuse his part in the affair, by proving to me, how insen-

sible he is to the principles which move a patriot, and a man of honour.

“ Having learnt from some too well-informed spy, that Lord Mar had retired in peaceful obscurity to Bute, these arch-enemies to our country, sent a body of men, disguised as Scots, to Gourock. There they despatched a messenger into the island, to inform Lord Mar, that Sir William Wallace was on the banks of the frith, waiting to converse with him. My noble father, unsuspecting of treachery, hurried to the summons. Lady Mar accompanied him; and so both fell into the snare.

“ They were brought prisoners to Stirling, where another affliction awaited him: — he was to see his daughter and his sister in captivity.

“ After I had been betrayed from St. Fillan’s monastery by the falsehoods of one Scottish knight; and rescued from his power by the gallantry of another; I sought the protection of my aunt, Lady Ruthven, who then dwelt at Alloa on the banks of the Forth.* Her husband had been invited to Ayr, by some treacherous requisition of the Governor Arnulf; and with many other lords was thrown into prison. Report says, bravest of men! that you have given freedom to my betrayed uncle.

“ The moment Lord Ruthven’s person was secured, his estates were seized; and my aunt and myself being found at Alloa, we were carried prisoners to this city. Alas! we had then no valiant arm to preserve us from our enemies! — Lady Ruthven’s first-born son, was slain in the fatal day of Dunbar; and in terror of the like fate, she has placed her eldest surviving boy in a convent.

“ Some days after our arrival, my dear father was brought to Stirling. Though a captive in the town, I was not then confined to any closer durance than the walls. While he was yet passing through the streets, rumour told my aunt, that the Scottish lord then leading to prison, was her beloved brother. She flew to me, in an agony, to tell me the dreadful tidings. I heard no more, saw no more, till, having rushed into the streets, and bursting through every obstacle of crowd and soldiers, I found myself clasped in

* The remains of this ancient seat of the Mar family are yet visible.

my father's arms — in his shackled arms! — What a moment was that! Where was Sir William Wallace in that hour? Where the brave unknown knight, who had sworn to me to seek my father, and defend him with his life? — Both were absent, and he was in chains.

“ My grief and distraction baffled the attempts of the guards to part us: and what became of me, I know not, till I found myself lying on a couch, attended by many women, and supported by my aunt. When I had recovered to lamentation, and to tears, my aunt told me, I was in the apartments of the Deputy Warden. He, with Cressingham, having gone out to meet the man they had so basely drawn into their toils, De Valence, himself, saw the struggles of paternal affection contending against the men who would have torn a senseless daughter from his arms; and yet, merciless man! he separated us; and sent me, with my aunt, a prisoner to his house.

“ The next day, a packet was put into my aunt's hands, containing a few precious lines from my father to me; also a letter from the Countess to Lady Ruthven, full of your goodness to her, and to my father; and narrating the cruel manner in which they had been ravished from the asylum in which you had placed them. She then said, that could she find means of apprising you of the danger in which she and her husband are now involved, she would be sure of a second rescue. Whether she have ever found these means I know not; for all communication between us, since the delivery of that letter, has been rendered impracticable. The messenger that brought the packet, was a good Southron, who had been won by Lady Mar's entreaties. But on his quitting our apartments, he was seized by a servant of De Valence. On the same day he was put publicly to death; to intimidate all others, from the like compassion to the sufferings of unhappy Scotland. Oh! Sir William Wallace, will not your sword at last reach these men of blood!

“ But to return. Earl de Valence compelled my aunt to yield the packet to him. We had already read it, therefore did not regret it on that head, but feared the information it might give relative to you. In consequence of this circumstance, I was made a close prisoner. But captivity

could have no terrors for me, did it not divide me from my father. And, grief on grief! what words have I to write it? they have CONDEMNED HIM TO DIE! That fatal letter of my step-mother's, was brought out against him; and as your adherent, Sir William Wallace, they have sentenced him to lose his head!

“ I have knelt to Earl de Valence; I have implored my father's life at his hands; but to no purpose. He tells me, that Cressingham, at his side; and Ormsby, by letters from Scone; declare it necessary, that an execution of consequence should be made, to appal the discontented Scots; and, that as no lord is more esteemed in Scotland, than the Earl of Mar, *he must be the sacrifice!*”

“ Hasten then, my father's preserver, and friend! hasten to save him!—Oh, fly, for the sake of the country he loves: for the sake of the hapless beings dependant on his protection!—I shall be on my knees, till I hear your trumpet before the walls; for in you, and Heaven, now rest all the hopes of Helen Mar.”

A cold dew stood on the limbs of Wallace, as he closed the letter. It might be too late! The sentence was passed on the Earl, and his executioners were prompt as cruel: the axe might already have fallen!

He called to Ker, for the messenger to be brought in. He entered. Wallace enquired, how long he had been from Stirling. “ Only thirty-four hours,” replied the youth; adding, that he had travelled night and day, for fear the news of the risings in Annandale, and the taking of Berwick, should precipitate the Earl's death.

“ I accompany you this instant,” cried Wallace. “ Ker, see that the troops get under arms.” As he spoke, he turned into the room, where he had left the knight of Thirlestane.

“ Sir Richard Maitland,” said he, willing to avoid exciting his alarm, “ there is more work for us at Stirling. Lord Aymer de Valence has again escaped the death we thought had overtaken him; and is now in that citadel.—I have just received a summons thither, which I must obey.” At these words, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick gave a shout, and rushed from the apartment. Wallace looked

after him for a moment, and then continued—“ Follow us with your prayers, Sir Richard ; and I shall not despair of sending blessed tidings to the banks of the Lauder.”

“ What has happened ? ” enquired Murray, who saw that something more than the escape of De Valence, had been imparted to his general.

“ We must spare this good old man,” returned he, “ and have him conducted to his home, before I declare it publicly ; but the Earl of Mar is again a prisoner, and in Stirling.”

Murray, who instantly comprehended his uncle’s danger, speeded the departure of Sir Richard ; and, as Wallace held his stirrup, the chief laid his hand on his head and blessed him : “ The seer of Ercildown is too ill to bring his benediction himself, but I breathe it over this heroic brow ! ” Wallace bowed his head in silence ; and the bridle being in the hand of Lord Andrew, he led the horse out of the eastern gate of the town ; where, taking leave of the veteran knight, he soon rejoined his commander, whom he found in the midst of his chieftains.

He had informed them of the Earl of Mar’s danger ; and the policy, as well as justice, of rescuing so powerful, and patriotic a nobleman, from the threatened execution. Lord Ruthven needed no arguments, to precipitate him to the assistance of his brother, and his wife ; and the anxieties of the affectionate Edwin were all awake, when he knew that his mother was a prisoner. Lord Andrew smiled proudly, when he returned his cousin’s letter to Wallace : — “ We shall have the rogue on the nail yet,” cried he ; “ my uncle’s brave head is not ordained to fall by the stroke of such a coward ! ”

“ So I believe,” replied Wallace ; and then turning to Lord Dundaff—“ My Lord,” said he, “ I leave you governor of Berwick.”

The veteran warrior grasped Wallace’s hand. — “ To be your representative in this fortress, is the proudest station this war-worn frame hath ever filled. — My son must be my representative with you in the field.” He waved Sir John Graham towards him : the young knight advanced ; and Lord Dundaff, placing his son’s hands upon his target,

continued, "Swear, that as this defends the body, you will ever strive to cover Scotland from her enemies; and that from this hour, you will be the faithful friend and follower of Sir William Wallace."

"I swear," returned Graham, kissing the shield.* — Wallace pressed his hand: "I have brothers around me, rather than what the world calls friends! And with such valour, such fidelity to aid me, can I be otherwise than a victor? Heaven's anointed sword is with such fellowship!"

Edwin, who stood near this rite of generous enthusiasm, softly whispered to Wallace, as he turned towards his troops; "But amongst all these brothers, cease not to remember Edwin—the youngest and the least.—Ah, my beloved general, what Jonathan was to David, I would be to thee!"

Wallace looked on him with penetrating tenderness; his heart was suddenly wrung by a recollection, which the words of Edwin had recalled. "But thy *love, Edwin!* passes not the love of woman!" — "But it equals it," replied he; "what has been done for thee, I would do; only love me, as David did Jonathan, and I shall be the happiest of the happy." — "Be happy then, dear boy!" answered Wallace; "for all that ever beat in human breast, for friend or brother, lives in my heart for thee."

At that moment Sir John Graham rejoined them; and some other captains coming up, Wallace made the proper military dispositions, and every man took his station at the head of his division.

Until the men had marched far beyond the chance of rumours reaching Thirlestane, they were not informed of the Earl of Mar's danger. They conceived their present errand was the re-capture of De Valence. "But at a proper moment," said Wallace, "they shall know the whole truth: for," added he, "as it is a law of equity, that what concerns all, should be approved by all; and that common dangers should be repelled by united efforts; the

* This circumstance is recorded of Sir John Graham and his noble father, who was David Graham, Lord of Dundaff and Kincardine, and a descendant of the renowned Graham from whom the dyke is named.

people who follow our standards, not as hirelings, but with willing spirits, ought to know our reasons for requiring their services."

"They who follow you," said Graham, "have too much confidence in their leader, to require any reasons for his movements."

"It is to place that confidence on a sure foundation, my brave friends," returned Wallace, "that I explain, what there is no just reason to conceal. Should policy ever compel me to strike a blow, without previously telling my agents wherefore, I should then draw upon their faith; and expect that confidence in my honour and arms, which I now place on their discretion and fidelity."

Exordiums were not requisite, to nerve every limb, and to strengthen every heart, in the toilsome journey. Mountains were climbed, vast plains traversed, rivers forded, and precipices crossed, without one man in the ranks lingering on his steps, or dropping his head upon his pike, to catch a moment's slumber. Those who had fought with Wallace, longed to redouble their fame under his command; and they who had recently embraced his standard, panted with a virtuous ambition to rival these first-born in arms.

Sir Roger Kirkpatrick had been the first to fly to arms, on the march to Stirling being mentioned; and when Wallace stood forward, to declare that rest should be dispensed with till Stirling fell; full of a fierce joy, the ardent knight darted over every obstacle to reach his aim. He flew to the van of his troops, and hailing them forward: "Come on!" cried he, "and in the blood of Cressingham, let us for ever sink King Edward's Scottish crown."

The shouts of the men, who seemed to drink in the spirit that blazed from Kirkpatrick's eyes, made the echoes of Lammermuir ring with a strange noise. It was the voice of liberty. Leaping every bound, the eager van led the way; and, with prodigious perseverance, dragging their war-machines in the rear, the rest pressed on, till they reached the Carron side. At the moment the foaming steed of Wallace, smoking with the labours of a long and rapid march, was plunging into the stream to take the ford, Ker snatched the bridle of the horse: — "My Lord,"

cried he, "a man on full speed from Douglas castle, has brought this packet."

In his march from Ayr, Wallace had left Sir Eustace Maxwell governor of that castle, and Monteith as his lieutenant.

Wallace opened the packet, and read as follows:—

"The patriots in Annandale have been beaten by Lord de Warenne. Sir John Monteith (who volunteered to head them), is taken prisoner, with twelve hundred men.

"Earl de Warenne comes, to resume the arrogant title of Lord Warden of Scotland; and thereby, to relieve his deputy, Aymer de Valence, who is recalled to take possession of the lordship of Pembroke. In pursuance of his usurping commission, the Earl is now marching rapidly towards the Lothians, in the hope of intercepting you in your progress.

"Thanks to the information you send us of your movements, for our being enabled to apprise you of this danger! I should have attempted to have checked the Southron, by annoying his flanks, had not his numbers rendered such an enterprise, on my part, hopeless. But his aim, being to come up with you; if you beat him in the van, we shall have him in the rear; and he must be surrounded and cut to pieces. Surely the tree you planted in Dumbarton, is not now to be blasted!—Ever my General's, and Scotland's true servant,

"EUSTACE MAXWELL."

"What answer?" enquired Ker.

Wallace hastily engraved with his dagger's point, upon his gauntlet, "*Reviresco!** My sun is above!" and desiring it might be given to the messenger, to carry to Sir Eustace Maxwell, he refixed himself in his saddle, and spurred over the Carron.

The moon was near her meridian, as the wearied troops halted on the deep shadows of the Carse of Stirling. All around them was desolation: the sword, and the fire, had been there: not in declared warfare, but under the darkness of midnight, and impelled by rapacity or wantonness;

* *Reviresco!* means, *I bud again!* This encouraging word is now the motto of the Maxwell arms.

hence from the base of the rock, even to the foot of the Clackmannan hills, all lay a smoking wilderness.

An hour's rest was sufficient to restore every exhausted power to the limbs of the determined followers of Wallace. And, as the morning dawned, the sentinels on the ramparts of the town, were not only surprised to see a host below, but that part, by the most indefatigable labour, and a silence like death, had not only passed the ditch, but having gained the counterscarp, had fixed their moveable towers; and were at that instant overlooking the highest bastions. The mangonels, and petraries, and other implements for battering walls; and the ballista, with every efficient means of throwing missive weapons, were ready to discharge their artillery upon the heads of the besieged.

At a sight so unexpected, which seemed to have arisen out of the earth like an exhalation, (with such muteness, and expedition, had the Scottish operations been carried on,) the Southrons, struck with dread, fled a moment from the walls; but immediately recovering their presence of mind, they returned, and discharged a cloud of arrows upon their assailants. A messenger, meanwhile, was sent into the citadel, to apprise De Valence, and the Governor Cressingham, of the assault. The interior gates, now sent forth thousands to the walls: but in proportion to the numbers which approached, the greater was the harvest of death prepared for the terrible arm of Wallace; whose tremendous war-wolfs, throwing prodigious stones; and lighter springalls, casting forth brazen darts, swept away file after file of the reinforcements. It grieved the noble heart of the Scottish commander, to see so many valiant men urged to inevitable destruction; but still they advanced; and that his own might be preserved, they must fall. To shorten the bloody contest, his direful weapons were worked with redoubled energy; and so mortal a shower fell that the heavens seemed to rain iron. The crushed, and stricken enemy, shrinking under the mighty tempest, forsook their ground.

The ramparts deserted, Wallace sprung from his tower, upon the walls. At that moment, De Valence opened one of the gates; and, at the head of a formidable body,

charged the nearest Scots. A good soldier is never taken unawares, and Murray and Graham were prepared to receive him. Furiously driving him to a retrograde motion, they forced him back into the town. But there, all was confusion; Wallace, with his resolute followers, had already put Cressingham, and his legions to flight; and, closely pursued by Kirkpatrick, they threw themselves into the castle. Meanwhile, the victorious Wallace surrounded the amazed De Valence; who, caught in double toils, called to his men, to fight for their King, and neither give, nor take quarter.

The brave fellows too strictly obeyed: and while they fell on all sides, he supported them with a courage, which horror of Wallace's vengeance, for his grandfather's death, and the attempt on his own life in the hall at Dumbarton, rendered desperate. At last he encountered the conquering chief, arm to arm. Great was the dread of De Valence, at this meeting: but as death was now all he saw before him, he resolved, if he must die, that the soul of his enemy should attend him to the other world.

He fought; not with the steady valour of a warrior, determined to vanquish, or to die; but with the fury of despair; with the violence of a hyena, thirsting for the blood of her opponent. Drunk with rage, he made a desperate plunge at the heart of Wallace; a plunge, armed with execrations, and all his strength: but his sword missed its aim, and entered the side of a youth, who, at that moment, had thrown himself before his general. Wallace saw where the deadly blow fell; and instantly closing on the Earl — with a vengeance in his eyes, which reminded his now determined victim, of the horrid vision he had seen in the burning Barns of Ayr, — with one grasp of his arm, the incensed chief hurled him to the ground; and setting his foot upon his breast, would have buried his dagger there, had not De Valence dropped his uplifted sword, and with horror in every feature, raised his clasped hands in speechless supplication.

Wallace suspended the blow; and De Valence exclaimed, "My life! this once again gallant Wallace! by your hopes of heaven, grant me mercy!"

Wallace looked on the trembling recreant, with a glance,

which, had he possessed the soul of a man, would have made him grasp at death, rather than deserve a second. "And hast thou escaped me again?" cried Wallace; then turning his indignant eyes from the abject Earl, to his bleeding friend, "I yield him his life, Edwin, and you perhaps, are slain?"

"Forget not your own bright principle, to avenge me," said Edwin, gently smiling: "he has only wounded me. But you are safe, and I hardly feel a smart."

Wallace replaced his dagger in his girdle. "Rise, Lord De Valence: it is my honour, not my will, that grants your life. You threw away your arms! I cannot strike even a murderer, who bares his breast. I give you that mercy, you denied to nineteen, unoffending, defenceless old men; whose hoary heads, your ruthless axe, brought with blood to the ground. Let memory be the sword, I have withheld!"

While he spoke, De Valence had risen, and stood, conscience-struck, before the majestic mien of Wallace. There was something in this denunciation, that sounded like the irreversible decree of a divinity; and the condemned wretch quaked beneath the threat, while he panted for revenge.

The whole of the survivors in De Valence's train, having surrendered themselves when their leader fell; in a few minutes, Wallace was surrounded by his chieftains, bringing in the colours, and the swords of their prisoners.

"Sir Alexander Ramsay," said he, to a brave and courteous knight, who had joined him in the Lothians; "I confide Earl de Valence, to your care. See that he is strongly guarded; and has every respect, according to the honour of him to whom I commit this charge."

The town was now in possession of the Scots; and Wallace, having sent off the rest of his prisoners to safe quarters, reiterated his persuasions to Edwin, to leave the ground, and submit his wounds to the surgeon. — "No, no," replied he; "the same hand that gave me this, inflicted a worse on my general at Dumbarton: he kept the field then; and shall I retire now, and disgrace my example? No, my brother; you would not have me so disprove my kindred!"

“Do as you will,” answered Wallace, with a grateful smile; “so that you preserve a life, that must never again be risked to save mine. While it is necessary for me to live, my Almighty Captain will shield me: but when his word goes forth, that I shall be recalled, it will not be in the power of friendship, nor of hosts, to turn the steel from my breast. Therefore, dearest Edwin, throw not yourself away, in defending, what is in the hands of Heaven, to be lent, or to be withdrawn at will.”

Edwin bowed his modest head; and having suffered a balsam to be poured into his wound, braced his brigandine over his breast; and was again at the side of his friend, just as he had joined Kirkpatrick before the citadel. The gates were firmly closed: and the dismayed Cressingham was panting behind its walls, as Wallace commanded the parley to be sounded. Afraid of trusting himself within arrow-shot of an enemy, who he believed conquered by witchcraft, the terrified governor sent his lieutenant upon the walls, to answer the summons.

The herald of the Scots demanded the immediate surrender of the place. Cressingham was at that instant informed by a messenger, who had arrived too late the preceding night to be allowed to disturb his slumbers, that De Warenne was approaching with an immense army. Inflated with new confidence, he mounted the wall himself, and in haughty language returned for answer, “That he would fall under the towers of the citadel, before he would surrender to a Scottish rebel. And as an example of the fate, which such a delinquent merits,” continued he, “I will change the milder sentence passed on Lord Mar, and immediately hang him, and all his family, on these walls, in sight of your insurgent army.”

“Then,” cried the herald, “thus says Sir William Wallace — If even one hair on the heads of the Earl of Mar, and his family, fall with violence to the ground; every Southron soul, who has this day surrendered to the Scottish arms, shall lose his head by the axe.”

“We are used to the blood of traitors,” cried Cressingham, “and mind not its scent. But the army of Earl de Warenne is at hand: and it is at the peril of all your

necks, for the rebel, your master, to put his threat in execution. Withdraw, or you shall see the dead bodies of Donald Mar, and his family, fringing these battlements; for no terms do we keep with man, woman, or child, who is linked with treason!"

At these words, an arrow winged from a hand behind Cressingham, flew directly to the unvisored face of Wallace: but it struck too high, and, ringing against his helmet, fell to the ground.

"Treachery!" resounded from every Scottish lip; while indignant at so villanous a rupture of the parley, every bow was drawn to the head; and a flight of arrows, armed with retribution, flew towards the battlements. All hands were now at work, to bring the towers to the wall; and mounting on them, while the archers, by their rapid showers, drove the men from the ramparts, soldiers below, with pickaxes, dug into the wall, to make a breach.

Cressingham began to fear, that his boasted auxiliaries might arrive too late; but determining to gain time at least, he shot flights of darts, and large stones, from a thousand engines; also discharged burning combustibles over the ramparts, in hopes of setting fire to the enemy's attacking machines.

But all his promptitude proved of no effect. The walls were giving way in parts; and Wallace was mounting by scaling ladders, and clasping the parapets with bridges from his towers. Driven to extremity, Cressingham resolved to try the attachment of the Scots for Lord Mar; and even at the moment when their chief had seized the barbican, and outer ballium, this sanguinary politician ordered the imprisoned Earl to be brought out upon the wall of the inner ballia. A rope was round his neck, which was instantly run through a groove, that projected from the nearest tower.

At this sight, horror froze the ardent blood of Wallace. But the intrepid Earl, descrying his friend on the ladder, which would soon carry him to the summit of the battlement, exclaimed, "Do not hesitate! Let not my span of life stand between my country, and this glorious day for Scotland's freedom!"

“Execute the sentence!” cried the infuriate Cressingham.

At these words, Murray and Edwin precipitated themselves upon the ramparts, and mowed down all before them, in a direction towards their uncle. The lieutenant who held the cord, aware of the impolicy of the cruel mandate, hesitated to fulfil it; and now fearing a rescue from the impetuous Scots, hurried his victim off the works back to his prison. Meanwhile Cressingham, perceiving that all would be lost, should he suffer the enemy to gain this wall also, sent such numbers upon those who had followed the cousins, that, overcoming some, and repelling others, they threw Murray, with a sudden shock, over the ramparts. Edwin was surrounded; and his successful adversaries were bearing him off, struggling and bleeding, when Wallace, springing like a lioness on the hunters carrying away her young, rushed in singly amongst them. He seized Edwin; and while his falchion flashed terrible threatenings in their eyes, with a backward step, he fought his passage to one of the wooden towers he had fastened to the wall.

Cressingham, being wounded in the head, commanded a parley to be sounded.

“We have already taken Lord de Valence, and his host, prisoners,” returned Wallace; “and we grant you no cessation of hostilities, till you deliver up the Earl of Mar, and his family; and surrender the castle into our hands.”

“Think not, proud boaster!” cried the herald of Cressingham, “that we ask a parley, to conciliate. It was to tell you, that if you do not draw off directly, not only the Earl of Mar, and his family, but every Scottish prisoner within these walls, shall perish in your sight.”

While he yet spoke, the Southrons uttered a great shout. And the Scots looking up, beheld several high poles erected on the roof of the keep; and the Earl of Mar, as before, was led forward. But he seemed no longer the bold and tranquil patriot. He was surrounded by shrieking female forms, clinging to his knees; and his trembling hands were lifted to heaven, as if imploring its pity.

“Stop!” cried Wallace, in a voice whose thundering

mandate rung from tower to tower. "The instant he dies, Lord Aymer de Valence shall perish."

He had only to make the sign, and in a few minutes that nobleman appeared, between Ramsay and Kirkpatrick. "Earl," exclaimed Wallace, "though I granted your life in the field with reluctance, yet here I am ashamed to put it in danger. But your own people compel me. Look on that spectacle! A venerable father, in the midst of his family; he, and they, doomed to an ignominious, and instant death, unless I betray my country, and abandon these walls! Were I weak enough to purchase their lives at such an expense, they could not survive that disgrace. But that they shall not die, while I have power to preserve them, is my resolve, and my duty! — Life, then, for life: yours for this family!"

Wallace, directing his voice towards the keep; "The moment," cried he, "in which that vile cord, presses too closely on the neck of the Earl of Mar, or of any of his blood, the axe shall sever the head of Lord De Valence from his body."

De Valence was now seen on the top of one of the besieging towers. He was pale as death. He trembled; but not with dismay only; ten thousand varying emotions tore his breast. To be thus set up as a monument of his own defeat; to be threatened with execution, by an enemy he had contemned; to be exposed to such indignities, by the unthinking ferocity of his colleague; filled him with such contending passions of revenge, against friends and foes, that he forgot the present fear of death, in turbulent wishes to deprive of life, all by whom he suffered.

Cressingham became alarmed, on seeing the retaliating menace of Wallace, brought so directly before his view: and dreading the vengeance of De Valence's powerful family, he ordered a herald to say, that if Wallace would draw off his troops to the outer ballium, until evening, the Lord Mar, and his family, should be taken from their perilous situation; and he would consider on terms of surrender.

Aware that Cressingham only wanted to gain time, until De Warenne should arrive, Wallace determined to

foil him with his own weapons, and make the gaining of the castle the consequence of vanquishing the Earl. He told the now perplexed governor, that he should consider Lord de Valence as the hostage of safety for Lord Mar and his family ; and therefore he consented to withdraw his men from the inner ballium, till the setting of the sun ; at which hour he should expect a herald, with the surrender of the fortress.

Thinking that he had caught the Scottish chief in a snare ; and that the Lord Warden's army would be upon him long before the expiration of the armistice ; Cressingham congratulated himself upon his manœuvre ; and, resolving that the moment Earl de Warenne should appear, Lord Mar should be secretly destroyed in the dungeons, he ordered him to their security again.

Wallace fully comprehended what were his enemy's views ; and what ought to be his own measures, as soon as he saw the unhappy group disappear from the battlements of the keep. He then recalled his men from the inner ballium wall ; and stationing several detachments along the ramparts, and in the towers of the outer wall, committed De Valence to the strong hold of the barbican, under the especial charge of Lord Ruthven : who was indeed eager to hold the means in his own hand, that were to check the threatened danger of relatives so dear to him, as were the prisoners in the castle.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CAMBUS-KENNETH.

HAVING secured the advantages he had gained in the town and on the works of the castle, by manning all the strong places, Wallace set forward with his chosen troops, to intercept De Warenne.

He took his position on a commanding ground, about half a mile from Stirling, near to the abbey of Cambus-

Kenneth. The Forth lay before him, crossed by a wooden bridge ; over which the enemy must pass to reach him, the river not being fordable in that part.

He ordered the timbers which supported the bridge to be sawed at the bottom, but not displaced in the least, that they might stand perfectly firm, for as long as he should deem it necessary. To these timbers were fastened strong cords, all of which he intrusted to the sturdiest of his Lanark-men, who were to lie concealed amongst the flags. These preparations being made, he drew up his troops in order of battle. Kirkpatrick and Murray commanded the flanks. In the centre stood Wallace himself, with Ramsay on one side of him, and Edwin, with Scrymgeour on the other ; awaiting with steady expectation the approach of the enemy, who, by this time, could not be far distant.

Cressingham was not less well informed of the advance of De Warenne ; and burning with revenge against Wallace, and earnest to redeem the favour of De Valence by some act in his behalf, he first gave certain orders to his lieutenant, then set forth alone, to seek an avenue of escape never divulged to any but to the commanders of the fortress. He soon discovered it ; and by the light of a torch, making his way through a passage bored in the rock, emerged at its western base, screened from sight by the surrounding bushes. He had disguised himself in a shepherd's bonnet and plaid, in case of being observed by the enemy ; but fortune favoured him ; and unseen he crept along through the thickets, till he descried the advance of De Warenne's army on the skirts of Tor wood.

Having missed Wallace in West Lothian, De Warenne divided his army into three divisions, to enter Stirlingshire by different routes, and so, he hoped, certainly to intercept him in one of them. The Earl of Montgomery led the first, of twenty thousand men ; the Barons Hilton and Blenkinsopp, the second, of ten thousand ; and De Warenne himself, the third, of thirty thousand.

It was the first of these divisions that Cressingham encountered in Tor wood ; and revealing himself to Montgomery, he recounted how rapidly Wallace had gained the

town, and in what jeopardy the citadel would be, if he were not instantly attacked. The Earl advised waiting for a junction with Hilton, or the Lord Warden; "which," said he, "must happen in the course of a few hours."

"In the course of a few hours," returned Cressingham, "you will have no Stirling castle to defend. The enemy will seize it at sunset, in pursuance of the very agreement by which I warded him off, to give us time to annihilate him before that hour. Therefore no hesitation; if we would not see him lock the gates of the north of Scotland upon us, even when we have the power to hurl him to perdition."

By arguments such as these, the young Earl was induced to give up his judgment; and, accompanied by Cressingham, whose courage revived amid such a host, he proceeded to the southern bank of the Forth.

The bands of Wallace were drawn up on the opposite shore, hardly five thousand strong; but so disposed, the enemy could not calculate their numbers; though the narrowness of their front, suggested to Cressingham that they could not be numerous; and he recollected that many must have been left to occupy the outworks of the town, and the citadel. "It will be easy to surround the rebel," cried he; "and that we may effect our enterprise, before the arrival of the Warden robs us of the honour, let us about it directly, and cross the bridge!"

Montgomery proposed a herald being sent, to inform Wallace, that besides the long line of troops he saw, De Warenne was advancing with double hosts: and if he would now surrender, a pardon should be granted to him and his, in the King's name, for all their late rebellions. Cressingham was vehement against this measure, but Montgomery being resolute, the messenger was despatched.

In a few minutes he returned, and repeated to the Southron commanders, the words of Wallace:—"Go," said he, "tell your masters, we came not here to treat for a pardon, of what we shall never allow to be an offence: we came to assert our rights; to set Scotland free. Till that is effected, all negotiation is vain. Let them advance, they will find us prepared."

“Then onward!” cried Montgomery; and spurring his steed, he led the way to the bridge: his eager soldiers followed; and the whole of his centre ranks passed over. The flanks advanced; and the bridge, from end to end, was filled with archers, cavalry, men-at-arms, and war-carriages. Cressingham, in the midst, was hallooing, in proud triumph, to those who occupied the rear of the straining beams; when the blast of a trumpet sounded, from the till now silent, and immovable Scottish phalanx. It was re-echoed by shouts, from behind the passing enemy—and in that moment, the supporting piers of the bridge* were pulled away; and the whole of its mailed throng was precipitated into the stream.

The cries of the maimed, and the drowning, were joined by the terrific slogan of two bands of Scots. The one, with Wallace, towards the head of the river; while the other, under the command of Sir John Graham, rushed from its ambuscade on the opposite bank, upon the rear of the dismayed troops; and both divisions sweeping all before them, drove those who fought on land, into the river; and those who had just escaped the flood, to meet its waves again, a bleeding host.

In the midst of this conflict, which rather seemed a carnage than a battle, Kirkpatrick, having heard the proud shouts of Cressingham on the bridge, now sought him amidst its shattered timbers. With the ferocity of a tiger, hunting his prey, he ran from man to man; and, as the struggling wretches emerged from the water, he plucked them from the surge; but even while his glaring eye-balls, and uplifted axe, threatened destruction, he only looked on them; and with imprecations of disappointment, rushed forward on his chase. Almost in despair, that the waves had cheated his revenge, he was hurrying on in another direction, when he perceived a body moving through a hollow on his right. He turned, and saw the object of his search, crawling amongst the mud and sedges.

“Ha!” cried Kirkpatrick, with a voice of thunder:

* This historical fact relating to the bridge, is yet exultingly repeated on the spot; and the number of the Southrons who fell beneath the arms of so small a band of Scots, is not less the theme of triumph.

“Art thou yet mine?—Damned, damned villain!” cried he, springing upon his breast: “Behold the man you dishonoured!—behold the hot cheek your dastard hand defiled!—Thy blood shall obliterate the stain; and then Kirkpatrick may again front the proudest in Scotland!”

“For mercy!” cried the horror-struck Cressingham; struggling with preternatural strength, to extricate himself.

“Hell would be my portion, did I grant any to thee,” cried Kirkpatrick; and with one stroke of his axe, he severed the head from its body. “I am a man again!” shouted he, as he held its bleeding veins in his hand, and placed it on the point of his sword. “Thou ruthless priest of Moloch, and of Mammon, thou shalt have thine own blood to drink, while I show my general how proudly I am avenged!” As he spoke, he dashed amongst the victorious ranks; and reached Wallace, at the very moment he was extricating himself from his fallen horse, which a random arrow had shot under him. Murray, at the same instant, was bringing up the wounded Montgomery; who came to surrender his sword, and to beg quarter for his men. The Earl turned deadly pale; for the first object that struck his sight, was the fierce knight of Torthorald, walking under the stream of blood, which continued to flow from the ghastly head of Cressingham, as he held it triumphantly in the air.

“If that be your chief,” cried Montgomery, “I have mistaken him much—I cannot yield my sword to him.”

Murray understood him:—“If cruelty be an evil spirit,” returned he, “it has fled every breast in this army, to shelter with Sir Roger Kirkpatrick; and its name is Legion! *That* is my chief!” added he, pointing to Wallace, with an evident consciousness of deriving honour from his command. The chief rose from the ground, dyed in the same ensanguined hue which had excited the abhorrence of Montgomery, though it had been drawn from his own veins, and those of his horse. All, indeed, of blood about him, seemed to be on his garments; none was in his eyes, none in his heart, but what warmed it to mercy and to benevolence for all mankind. His eye momentarily fell on

the approaching figure of Kirkpatrick ; who, waving the head in the air, blew from his bugle the triumphal notes of the *Pryse**, and then cried to his chief: "I have slain the wolf of Scotland! My brave clansmen are now casing my target with his skin† ; which, when I strike its bossy sides, will cry aloud, So perishes thy dishonour ! So perish all the enemies of Scotland !"

"And with the extinction of that breath, Kirkpatrick," cried Wallace, looking sternly from the head to him, "let your fell revenge perish also. For your own honour, commit no indignities on the body you have slain."

"'Tis for you to conquer like a god!" cried Kirkpatrick: "I have felt as a man, and like a man I revenge. This head shall destroy, even in death: it shall vanquish its friends for me ; for I will wear it like a Gorgon on my sword, to turn to stone every Southron who looks on it." While speaking, he disappeared amongst the thickening ranks ; and as the triumphant Scots hailed him in passing, Montgomery thinking of his perishing men, suffered Murray to lead him to the scene of his humility.

The ever-comprehensive eye of Wallace perceived him, as he advanced ; and guessing by his armour and dignified demeanour, who he was, with a noble grace, he raised his helmed bonnet from his head, when the Earl approached him. Montgomery looked on him ; he felt his soul, even more than his arms, subdued ; but still there was something about a soldier's heart, that shrunk from yielding his power of resistance. The blood mounted into his before pale checks : he held out his sword in silence to the victor ; for he could not bring his tongue to pronounce the word "surrender."

Wallace understood the sign, and holding up his hand to a herald, the trumpet of peace was raised. It sounded :— and where the moment before, were the horrid clash of arms, the yell of savage conquest, and direful cries for mercy, all was still as death. Not that death which has past, but that which is approaching.—None spoke ; not a

* The *Pryse* were the notes sounded in hunting at the death of the game.

† It is recorded that the memory of Cressingham was so odious to the Scots, they did indeed flay his dead body, and made saddles and girths and other things of his skin.

sound was heard, but the low groans of the dying, who lay, overwhelmed and perishing, beneath the bodies of the slain, and the feet of the living.

The voice of Wallace rose from this awful pause. — Its sound was ever the harbinger of glory, or of “good will to men.” — “Soldiers!” cried he, “God has given victory — let us show our gratitude, by moderation and mercy. Gather the wounded into quarters, and bury the dead.”

Wallace then turned to the extended sword of the Earl: he put it gently back with his hand: “Ever wear, what you honour,” said he; “but, gallant Montgomery, when you draw it next, let it be in a better cause. Learn, brave Earl, to discriminate between a warrior’s glory, and his shame; between the defender of his country, and the unprovoked ravager of other lands.”

Montgomery blushed scarlet, at these words; but it was not with resentment. He looked down for a moment: — “Ah!” thought he, “perhaps I ought never to have drawn it here!” Then raising his eyes to Wallace, he said — “Were you not the enemy of my king, who, though a conqueror, sanctions none of the cruelties that have been committed in his name, I would give you my hand, before the remnant of his brave troops, whose lives you grant. But you have my heart; a heart that knows no difference between friend or foe, when the bonds of virtue would unite, what only civil dissensions hold separate.”

“Had your king possessed the virtues you believe he does,” replied Wallace, “my sword might have now been a pruning hook. But that is past! We are in arms for injuries received, and to drive out a tyrant. For, believe me, noble Montgomery, that monarch has little pretensions to virtue, who suffers the oppressors of his people, or of his conquests, to go unpunished. To connive at cruelty, is to practise it. And has Edward ever frowned on one of those despots, who, in his name, have, for these two years past, laid Scotland in blood and ashes?”

The appeal was too strong for Montgomery to answer: he felt its truth, and bowed, with an expression in his face, that told more, than as a subject of England, he dared declare.

The late expecting silence was turned into the clamorous activity of eager obedience. The prisoners were conducted to the rear of Stirling ; while the major part of the Scots, (leaving a detachment, to unburden the earth of its bleeding load,) returned in front of the gates, just as De Warrenne's division appeared on the horizon, like a moving cloud gilded by the now setting sun. At this sight, Wallace sent Edwin into the town, with Lord Montgomery ; and marshalling his line, prepared to bear down upon the approaching Earl.

But the Lord Warden had received information, which fought better for the Scots than an host of swords. When advanced a very little onward on the Carse of Stirling, one of his scouts brought intelligence, that having approached the south side of the Forth, he had seen that river floating with dead bodies ; and soon after met Southron soldiers in full flight, while he heard from afar the Scottish horns blowing the notes of victory. From what he learnt from the fugitives, he also informed his lord, " that not only the town and citadel of Stirling, were in the possession of Sir William Wallace, but the two detachments under Montgomery and Hilton, had both been discomfited, and their leaders slain or taken."

At this intelligence, Earl de Warrenne stood aghast ; and while he was still doubting that such disgrace to King Edward's arms could be possible, two or three fugitives came up, and witnessed to its truth. One, had seen Kirkpatrick, with the bloody head of the governor of Stirling, on his sword. Another, had been near Cressingham in the wood, when he told Montgomery of the capture of De Valence ; and concluding that he meant the leader of the third division, he corroborated the scout's information of the two defeats ; adding (for terror magnified the objects of fear), that the Scots army was incalculable ; but was so disposed by Sir William Wallace, as to appear inconsiderable, that he might ensnare his enemies, by filling them with hopes of an easy conquest.

These accounts persuaded De Warrenne to make a retreat ; and intimidated by the exaggerated representations of them

who had fled, his men, with no little precipitation, turned to obey.

Wallace perceived the retrograde motion of his enemy's lines ; and while a stream of arrows from his archers poured upon them like hail, he bore down upon the rear-guard with his cavalry and men-at-arms, and sent Graham round by the wood, to surprise the flanks.

All was executed with promptitude ; and the tremendous slogen sounding from side to side, the terrified Southrons, before in confusion, now threw away their arms, to lighten themselves for escape. — Sensible that it is not the number of the dead, but the terror of the living, which gives the finishing stroke to conquest, De Warenne saw the effects of this panic, in the total disregard of his orders ; and dreadful would have been the carnage of his troops, had he not sounded a parley.

The bugle of Wallace instantly answered it. De Warenne sent forward his herald. He offered to lay down his arms, provided he might be exempted from relinquishing the royal standard ; and that he, and his men, might be permitted to return without delay into England.

Wallace accepted the first article ; granted the second ; but with regard to the third, it must be on condition, that he, the Lord De Warenne, and the officers taken in his army, or in other engagements lately fought in Scotland, should be immediately exchanged for the like number of noble Scots, Wallace should name, who were prisoners in England ; and that the common men of the army, now about to surrender their arms, should take an oath never to serve again against Scotland.

These preliminaries being agreed to, (their very boldness, arguing the conscious advantage, which seemed to compel the assent,) the Lord Warden advanced at the head of his 30,000 troops ; and first laying down his sword, which Wallace immediately returned to him ; the officers and soldiers marched by, with their heads uncovered, throwing down their weapons, as they approached their conqueror. Wallace extended his line, while the procession moved ; for he had too much policy, to show his enemies, that 30,000 men had yielded, almost without a blow, to scarce

5000. The oath was afterwards administered to each regiment, by heralds, sent for that purpose into the strath of Monteith, whither Wallace had directed the captured legions to assemble, and refresh themselves, previous to their departure next morning for England. The privates thus disposed of, to release himself from the commanders also, Wallace told De Warenne, that duty called him away, but every respect would be paid to them by the Scottish officers.

He then gave directions to Sir Alexander Ramsay, to escort De Warenne, and the rest of the noble prisoners, to Stirling. Wallace himself, turned with his veteran band, to give a conqueror's greeting to the Baron of Hilton ; and so ended the famous battles of Cambus-Kenneth, and the Carse of Stirling.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

STIRLING CASTLE.

THE prisoners which had been taken with Montgomery, were lodged behind the town, and the wounded carried into the abbey of Cambus-Kenneth ; but when Edwin came to move that Earl himself, he found him too faint with loss of blood to sit a horse to Snawdown. He therefore ordered a litter ; and so conveyed his brave prisoner to that palace of the kings of Scotland, in Stirling.

The priests in Wallace's army, not only exercised the Levitical, but the good Samaritan's functions ; and they soon obeyed the young knight's summons to dress the wounds of Montgomery.

Messengers, meanwhile, arrived from Wallace, acquainting his chieftains in Stirling with the surrender of De Warenne's army. Hence no surprise was created in the breast of the wounded Earl, when he saw his commander enter the palace, as the prisoner of the illustrious Scot.

Montgomery held out his hand to the Lord Warden, in silence, and with a flushed cheek.

“Blush not, my noble friend!” cried De Warenne; “these wounds speak more eloquently than a thousand tongues, the gallantry with which you maintained the sword, that fate compelled you to surrender. But I, without a scratch, how can I meet the unconquered Edward? And yet it was not for myself, I feared; my brave, and confiding soldiers, were in all my thoughts; for I saw it was not to meet an army I led them, but against a whirlwind, a storm of war, with which no strength that I commanded could contend.”

While the English generals thus conversed, Edwin’s impatient heart yearned to be again at the side of Wallace; and gladly resigning the charge of his noble prisoner, to Sir Alexander Ramsay; as soon as he observed a cessation in the conversation of the two earls, he drew near Montgomery, to take his leave.

“Farewell, till we meet again!” said the young Earl, pressing his hand: “You have been a friend, rather than an enemy to me.”

“Because,” returned Edwin, “I follow the example of my general, who would willingly be the friend of all mankind.”

Warenne looked at him with surprise: “And who are you, who in that stripling form utters sentiments which might grace the maturest years?”

With a sweet dignity, Edwin replied, “I am Edwin Ruthven, the adopted brother of Sir William Wallace.”

“And the son of him,” asked De Warenne, “who, with Sir William Wallace, was the first to mount Dumbarton walls?”

At these words, the cheeks of Edwin were suffused with a more animated bloom. At the moment when his courage was distinguished on the heights of Dumbarton, by the vowed friendship of Wallace, he had found himself beloved by the bravest, and most amiable of beings; and in his light, he felt both warmth and brightness: but this question of De Warenne, conveyed to him that he had found fame himself; that he was then publicly acknowledged, to

be an object not unworthy of being called the brother of Sir William Wallace!—and, casting down his eyes, beaming with exultation, from the fixed gaze of De Warenne, he answered, “ I am that happy Ruthven, who had the honour to mount Dumbarton rock by the side of my general; and from his hand, there received the stroke of knighthood.”

De Warenne rose, much agitated: “ If such be the boys of Scotland, need we wonder when the spirit of resistance is roused in the nation, that our strength should wither before its men ! ”

“ At least,” said Montgomery, whose admiration of what passed seemed to re-animate his languid faculties, “ it deprives defeat of its sting, when we are conscious we yielded to a power that was irresistible. But, my Lord,” added he, “ if the courage of this youth amazes you, what will you say ought to be the fate of this country, ought to be the crown of Sir William Wallace’s career, when you know by what a chain of brave hearts he is surrounded? Even tender woman loses the weakness of her sex, when she belongs to him.” Earl de Warrenne surprised at the energy with which he spoke, looked at him with an expression that told him so. — “ Yes,” continued he, “ I witnessed the heroism of Lady Wallace; when she defended the character of her husband in the midst of an armed host, and preserved the secret of his retreat inviolate. I saw that loveliest of women, whom the dastard Heselrigge slew.”

“ Disgrace to knighthood ! ” cried Edwin, with indignant vehemence: “ If you were spectator of that bloody deed, retire from this house; go to Cambus-Kenneth, any where; but leave this city before the injured Wallace arrives: blast not his eyes, with a second sight of one who could have beheld his wife murdered.”

Every eye was now fixed on the commanding figure of the young Edwin, who stood with the determination of being obeyed, breathing in every look. De Warenne then at once saw the possibility of so gentle a creature being transformed into the soul of enterprise, into the fearless and effective soldier.

Lord Montgomery held out his hand to Edwin. — “By this right arm, I swear, noble youth, that had I been on the spot, when Heselrigge lifted his sword against the breast of Lady Wallace, I would have sheathed my sword in his ! It was not then, that I saw that matchless woman. Offended with my want of severity in the scrutiny I had made at Ellerslie a few hours before, Heselrigge sent me instantly to Ayr. Arnulf quarrelled with me there, on the same subject ; and I immediately retired in disgust to England.”

“Then how ? — you ought to be Sir Gilbert Hambleton ?” replied Edwin ; “but whoever you are, as you were kind to the Lady Marion, I cannot but regret my late hasty charge ; and for which I beseech your pardon.”

Montgomery took his hand, and pressed it : “Generous Ruthven, your warmth is too honourable to need forgiveness. — I am that Sir Gilbert Hambleton ; and had I remained so, I should not now be in Scotland. But in my first interview with the Prince of Wales, after my accession to the earldom of Montgomery, he said, it had been rumoured from Scotland, that I was disloyal in my heart to my king : ‘and to prove the falsehood of your calumniators,’ continued he, ‘I appoint you second in command there, to the Earl de Warenne.’ To have refused to fight against Sir William Wallace, would have been to have accused myself of treason. And while I respected the husband of the murdered Lady Marion, I yet condemned him as an insurgent ; and with the same spirit you follow him to the field, I obeyed the commands of my prince.”

“Lord Montgomery,” returned Edwin, “I am rejoiced to see one, who proves to me, what my general, wronged as he has been, yet always inculcates — that all the Southrons are not base and cruel. When he knows who is indeed his prisoner, what recollections will it awaken ! But till you and he again meet, I shall not intimate to him the melancholy satisfaction he is to enjoy ; for, with the remembrances it will arouse, your presence must bring the antidote.”

The brave youth, then telling Ramsay in what parts of the palace the rest of the lords were to be lodged, with recovered composure descended to the court-yard, to take

horse for Tor wood. He was galloping along, under the bright light of the moon, when he heard a squadron on full speed approaching; and, presently Murray appeared at its head. "Hurrah, Edwin!" cried he, "you scent well! We come to demand the instant surrender of the citadel. Hilton's division has surrendered, and we are complete masters of the field."

The two barons had indeed come up, about half an hour after Earl de Warenne's division had met its fate. Sir William Wallace immediately sent forward his heralds, with the colours of De Valence and Montgomery; crowning the whole, with the warden-banner of De Warenne, and requiring the present enemy to lay down his arms. The sight of these standards was sufficient to assure Hilton, there was no deceit in the embassy. The nature of his position precluded retreat; and not seeing any reason for 10,000 men disputing the day with a power, to whom 50,000 had just surrendered, he, and his compeer, with the reluctance of veterans, embraced the terms of surrender.

The instant Hilton put his argent banner* into the victor's hand, Wallace knew the castle must now be his, since he had discomfited all who could have maintained it against him. Impatient to apprise Lord Mar and his family of their safety, he despatched Murray with a considerable escort, to demand its surrender.

Murray gladly obeyed; and accompanied by Edwin, with the banners of Cressingham, and De Warenne, trailing in the dust, he arrived before the castle, and summoned the lieutenant to the walls. But that officer, well aware of what was going to happen, feared to appear. From the battlements of the keep, he had seen the dreadful conflict on the banks of the Forth; he had seen the thousands of De Warenne pass before the conqueror. To punish their treachery, in not only having suffered Cressingham to steal out, under the armistice, but upholding also, the breaking of his word to surrender at sunset, the terrified officer be-

* The arms of Hilton are, argent, two bars azure. The charge on those of Blenkinsopp are three wheat sheaves; crest, a lion rampant, grasping a rose. The ruins of the patrimonial castles of these two ancient barons are still to be seen in the north of England.

lieved, that Wallace was now come, to put the whole garrison to the sword

At the first sight of Murray's approaching squadron, the lieutenant hurried to Lord Mar; to offer him immediate liberty, if he would go forth to Wallace, and treat with him to spare the lives of the garrison. Closed up in a solitary dungeon, the Earl knew nought of what was occurring without; and, when the Southron entered, he expected it was to lead him again to the death, which had been twice averted. But the pale and trembling lieutenant had no sooner spoken the first word, than Mar discerned it was a suppliant, not an executioner, he saw before him; and he was even promising that clemency from Wallace, which he knew dwelt in his heart, when Murray's trumpet sounded.

The lieutenant started, horror-struck. "It is now too late! I have not made the first overture; and there sounds the death-bell of this garrison! — I saved your life, Earl!" cried he, imploringly, to Lord Mar; "when the enraged Cressingham commanded me to pull the cord which would have launched you into eternity, — I disobeyed him! — For my sake, then, preserve this garrison, and accompany me to the ramparts."

The chains were immediately knocked off the limbs of Mar; and, the lieutenant presenting him with a sword, they appeared together on the battlements. As the declining moon shone on their backs, Murray did not discern that it was his uncle, who mounted the wall. But calling to him in a voice which declared there was no appeal, pointed to the humbled colours of Edward, and demanded the instant surrender of the citadel.

"Let it be then with the pledge of Sir William Wallace's mercy?" cried the venerable Earl.

"With every pledge, Lord Mar," returned Murray, now joyfully recognising his uncle, "which you think safe to give."

"Then the keys of the citadel are yours," cried the lieutenant: "I only ask the lives of my garrison."

This was granted; and immediate preparations were made for the admission of the Scots. As the enraptured Edwin heard the heavy chains of the portcullis drawing

up, and the massy bolts of the huge doors grating in their guards, he thought of his mother's liberty, of his father's joy, in pressing her again in his arms ; and hastening to the tower where Lord Ruthven held watch over the now sleeping De Valence, he told him all that had happened : " Go, my father," added he ; " enter with Murray, and be the first to open the prison-doors of my dearest mother."

Lord Ruthven embraced his son. — " My dear Edwin ! this sacrifice to my feelings, is worthy of you. But I have a duty to perform, superior, even to the tenderest private ones. I am planted here by my commander ; and shall I quit my station for any gratification, till he gives me leave ? No, dear boy. — Be you my representative to your mother : and while my example teaches you, above all earthly considerations to obey your honour, those tender embraces will show her, what I sacrifice to duty."

Edwin no longer urged his father ; and leaving his apartment, flew to the gate of the inner ballium. It was open : and Murray already stood on the platform before the keep, receiving the keys of the garrison.

" Blessed sight !" cried the Earl, to his nephew ; " when I put the banner of Mar into your unpractised hand, little could I expect, that, in the course of four months, I should see my brave Andrew receive the keys of proud Stirling from its commander !"

Murray smiled, while his plumed head bowed gratefully to his uncle ; and turning to the lieutenant, " Now," said he, " lead me to the ladies Mar and Ruthven ; that I may assure them, they are free."

The gates of the keep were now unclosed ; and the lieutenant conducted his victors, along a gloomy passage, to a low door, studded with knobs of iron. As he drew the bolt he whispered to Lord Mar, " These severities are the hard policy of Governor Cressingham."

He pushed the door slowly open, and discovered a small miserable cell ; whose walls of rugged stone, had no other covering than the incrustations, which time, and many a dripping winter, had strewn over their vaulted surface. On the ground, on a pallet of straw, lay a female figure in a profound sleep. But the light which the lieutenant held,

streaming full upon the uncurtained slumberer, she started, and, with a shriek of terror, at sight of so many armed men, discovered the pallid features of the Countess of Mar. With an anguish, which hardly the freedom he was going to bestow, could ameliorate, the Earl rushed forward, and throwing himself beside her, caught her in his arms.

“Are we then to die?” cried she, in a voice of horror: “Has Wallace abandoned us? — Are we to perish? — Heartless, heartless man!”

Overcome by his emotions, the Earl could only strain her to his breast, in speechless agitation. Edwin saw a picture of his mother’s sufferings, in the present distraction of the Countess; and he felt his powers of utterance locked up; but Lord Andrew, whose ever-light heart was gay, the moment he was no longer unhappy, jocosely answered, “My fair aunt, there are many hearts to die by your eyes, before that day! and, meanwhile, I come from Sir William Wallace — to set you free!”

The name of Wallace, and the intimation, that *he had sent to set her free*, drove every former thought of death, and misery, from her mind: again the ambrosial gales of love, seemed to breathe around her — she saw not her prison walls; she felt herself again in his presence: and in a blissful trance, rather endured, than participated, the warm congratulations of her husband on their mutual safety.

Edwin, and Murray, turned, to follow the lieutenant; who, preceding them, stopped at the end of the gallery, “Here,” said he, “is Lady Ruthven’s habitation; and — alas! — not better than the Countess’s.” While he spoke, he threw open the door, and discovered its sad inmate also asleep. But when the glad voice of her son pierced her ear; when his fond embraces clung to her bosom, her surprise, and emotions, were almost insupportable. Hardly crediting her senses, that he whom she had believed was safe in the cloisters of St. Columba, could be within the dangerous walls of Stirling; that it was his mailed breast, that pressed against her bosom; that it was his voice, she heard exclaiming, “Mother, we come to give you freedom!” all appeared to her like a dream of madness.

She listened, she felt him, she found her cheek wet with

his rapturous tears: — “Am I in my right mind?” cried she, looking at him, with a fearful, yet overjoyed countenance: “Am I not mad? O! tell me,” cried she, turning to Murray, and the lieutenant, “is this my son that I see, or has terror turned by brain?”

“It is indeed your son, your Edwin, my very self,” returned he, alarmed at the expression of her voice and countenance. Murray gently advanced, and kneeling down by her, respectfully took her hand. “He speaks truth, my dear madam. It is your son Edwin. He left his convent, to be a volunteer with Sir William Wallace. He has covered himself with honour, on the walls of Dumbarton; and here also, a sharer in his leader’s victories, he is come to set you free.”

At this explanation, which being given in the sober language of reason, Lady Ruthven believed, she gave way to the full happiness of her soul, and falling on the neck of her son, embraced him with a flood of tears: — “And thy father, Edwin! where is he? Did not the noble Wallace rescue him from Ayr?”

“He did, and he is here.” Edwin then repeated to his mother, the affectionate message of his father, and the particulars of his release. Perceiving how happily they were engaged, Murray now with a flutter in his own bosom, rose from his knees, and requested the lieutenant to conduct him to Lady Helen Mar.

His guide led the way, by a winding staircase, into a stone gallery; where letting Lord Andrew into a spacious apartment, divided in the midst by a vast screen of carved cedar-wood, he pointed to a curtained entrance: — “In that chamber,” said he, “lodges the Lady Helen.”

“Ah, my poor cousin!” exclaimed Murray, “though she seems not to have tasted the hardships of her parents, she has shared their misery I do not doubt.” While he spoke, the lieutenant bowed in silence, and Murray entered alone. The chamber was magnificent, and illumined by a lamp, which hung from the ceiling. He cautiously approached the bed, fearing too hastily to disturb her, and gently pulling aside the curtain, beheld vacancy. An exclamation of alarm had almost escaped him, when observing

a half-open door at the other side of the apartment, he drew towards it ; and there beheld his cousin, with her back to him, kneeling before a crucifix. She spoke not, but the fervour of her action manifested how earnestly she prayed. He moved behind her, but she heard him not : her whole soul was absorbed in the success of her petition ; and at last raising her clasped hands in a paroxysm of emotion, she exclaimed,—“ If that trumpet sounded the victory of the Scots, then, Power of Goodness ! receive thy servant’s thanks. But if De Warenne have conquered, where De Valence failed ; if all whom I love, be lost to me here, take me then to thyself ; and let my freed spirit fly to their embraces in heaven !”

“ Ay, and on earth too, thou blessed angel !” cried Murray, throwing himself towards her. She started from her knees ; and with such a cry, as the widow of Sarepta uttered, when she embraced her son from the dead, Helen threw herself on the bosom of her cousin, and closed her eyes in a blissful swoon — for even while every outward sense seemed fled, the impression of joy played about her heart ; and the animated throbbings of Murray’s breast, while he pressed her in his arms, at last aroused her to recollection. Her glistening, and uplifted eyes, told all the happiness, all the gratitude of her soul. “ My father ? — All are safe ?” demanded she. — “ All, my best beloved !” answered Murray, forgetting, in the powerful emotions of his heart, that what he felt, and what he uttered, were beyond even a cousin’s limits : — “ My uncle ; the Countess ; Lord and Lady Ruthven ; all are safe.”

“ And Sir William Wallace ?” cried she : “ You do not mention him. I hope no ill —”

“ He is conqueror here !” interrupted Murray : “ He has subdued every obstacle between Berwick and Stirling ; and he has sent me hither, to set you and the rest of the dear prisoners free.”

Helen’s heart throbbed with a new tumult as he spoke. She longed to ask, whether the unknown knight from whom she had parted in the hermit’s cell, had ever joined Sir William Wallace ? She yearned to know that he yet lived. At the thought of the probability of his having fallen in some

of these desperate conflicts, her soul seemed to gasp for existence ; and dropping her head on her cousin's shoulder : " Tell me, Andrew — " said she, and there she paused, with an emotion for which she could not account to herself.

" Of what would my sweet cousin enquire ? " asked Murray, partaking her agitation.

" Nothing particular, " said she, covered with blushes ; " but did you fight alone in these battles ? Did no other knight but Sir William Wallace ? "

" Many, dearest Helen, " returned Murray, enraptured at a solicitude, which he appropriated to himself. " Many knights joined our arms. All fought in a manner worthy of their leader ; and thanks to heaven, none have fallen. "

" Thanks, indeed ! " cried Helen ; and with a hope, she dared hardly whisper to herself, of seeing the unknown knight in the gallant train of the conqueror, she falteringly said, " Now, Andrew, lead me to my father. "

Murray would perhaps have required a second bidding, had not Lord Mar, impatient to see his daughter, appeared with the Countess at the door of the apartment. Hastening towards them, she fell on the bosom of her father ; and while she bathed his face and hands with her glad tears, he too wept, and mingled blessings with his caresses. No coldness here met his paternal heart : no distracting confusions tore her from his arms : no averted looks, by turns, alarmed and chilled the bosom of tenderness. All was innocence and duty in Helen's breast ; and every ingenuous action showed its affection and its joy. The estranged heart of Lady Mar had closed against him ; and though he suspected not its wanderings, he felt the unutterable difference between the warm transports of his daughter, and the frigid gratulations, forced from the lips of his wife.

Lady Mar gazed with a weird frown on the lovely form of Helen, as she wound her exquisitely turned arms around the Earl, in filial tenderness. Her bosom heaving in the snowy whiteness of virgin purity ; her face, radiant with the softest blooms of youth ; all seemed to frame an object, which malignant fiends had conjured up to blast her stepdame's hopes. " Wallace will behold these charms ! "

cried her distracted spirit to herself, "and then, where am I?"

While her thoughts thus followed each other, she unconsciously darted looks on Helen, which, if an evil eye had any witching power, would have withered all her beauties. At one of these portentous moments, the glad eyes of Helen met her glance: she started with horror. It made her remember how she had been betrayed, and all that she had suffered from Soulis. But she could not forget, that she had also been rescued; and with the blessed recollection, the image of her preserver rose before her. At this gentle idea, her alarmed countenance took a softer expression; and, tenderly sighing, she turned to her father's question of "How she came to be with Lady Ruthven; when he had been taught by Lord Andrew, to believe her safe at Saint Fillan's?"

"Yes," cried Murray, throwing himself on a seat beside her, "I found in your letter to Sir William Wallace, that you had been betrayed from your asylum by some traitor Scot; and but for the fulness of my joy at our present meeting, I should have enquired the name of the villain?"

Lady Mar felt a deadly sickness at her heart, on hearing that Sir William Wallace was already so far acquainted with her daughter, as to have received a letter from her; and, in amazed despair, she prepared to listen, to what she expected would bring a death-stroke to her hopes. They had met—they wrote to each other! Then, far indeed had proceeded that communication of hearts, which was the aim of her life—and she was undone! Helen glanced at the face of Lady Mar, and observing its changes, regarded them as corroborations of her guilt. It was conscience accusing her, of having intended to betray her husband's daughter to Soulis at Bothwell; and bidding her prepare to hear, how, in consequence, she had afterwards fallen into his hands!—"If conscience disturbs you thus," thought Helen, "let it rend your heart with shame, and perhaps remorse may follow!"

As the tide of success seemed so full for the patriot Scots, Helen no longer feared that her cousin would rashly seek a

precarious vengeance on the traitor Soulis, when he might probably soon have an opportunity of making it certain, at the head of an army. She therefore commenced her narrative, from the time of Murray's leaving her at the priory; and continued it to the hour in which she had met her father, a prisoner in the streets of Stirling. As she proceeded, the indignation of the Earl, and of Murray against Soulis, became vehement. The nephew was full of immediate personal revenge. But the father, with arguments similar to those which had suggested themselves to his daughter, calmed the lover's rage; for Murray now felt that fire, as well as a kinsman's; and reseated himself with repressed, though burning resentment, to listen to the remainder of her relation.

The quaking conscience of Lady Mar did indeed vary her cheeks with a thousand dyes, when, as Helen repeated part of her conversation with Macgregor's wife, Murray abruptly said, "Surely that woman could name the traitor who betrayed us into the hands of our enemies! Did she not hint it?"

Helen cast down her eyes, that even a glance might not overwhelm with insupportable shame the already trembling Countess. Lady Mar saw that she was acquainted with her guilt; and expecting no more mercy, than she knew she would show to Helen, in the like circumstances, she hastily rose from her chair; internally vowing vengeance against her triumphant daughter, and hatred of all mankind. But Helen thought she might have so erred, from her unreasonable alarm for the safety of the husband she professed to doat on; and this dutiful daughter determined never to accuse her.

While all the furies raged in the breast of the guilty woman, Helen simply answered, "Lord Soulis would be weak, as he is vile, to trust a secret of that kind with a servant." Then hurried on to the relation of subsequent events. The Countess breathed again; and, almost deceiving herself with the idea that Helen was indeed ignorant of her treachery, listened with emotions of another kind, when she heard of the rescue of her daughter-in-law. She saw Wallace in the brave act! But as Helen, unde-

signedly to herself, passed over the most interesting parts of their conversations, and never named the graces of his person, Lady Mar thought, that to have viewed Wallace with so little notice, would have been impossible; and therefore was glad of such a double conviction, that he and her daughter had never met, when she heard Helen say, that the unknown chief had promised to join his arms with those of Wallace.

Murray had observed Helen, while she spoke, with an impression at his heart, that made it pause. Something in this interview, had whispered to him, what he had never dreamt before; that she was dearer to him than fifty thousand cousins. And while the blood flushed, and retreated, in the complexion of Helen; and her downcast eyes refused to show what was passing there, while she hastily ran over the circumstances of her acquaintance with the stranger knight, Murray's own emotions declared the secret of hers; and with a lip as pale as her own, he said, "But where is this brave man? He cannot have yet joined us; for surely he would have told Wallace, or myself, that he came from you?"

"I warned him not to do so," replied she; "for fear that your indignation against my enemies, my dear cousin, might have precipitated you into dangers, to be incurred only for our country."

"Then, if he have joined us," replied Murray, rising from his seat, "you will probably soon know who he is. To-morrow morning, Sir William Wallace will enter the citadel, attended by his principal knights; and in that gallant company you will doubtless discover the man, who has laid such obligations on us all by your preservation. Glad shall I be to have an opportunity of expressing my gratitude."

Murray's feelings told him, that glad should he be, if that gratitude would repay him! if the confusion of Helen, when she mentioned him, did not arise from the conscious remembrance of some tenderer communion, than the mere act of her rescue!

Helen herself, knew not how to account for the agitation which shook her, whenever she adverted to her unknown

preserver. At the time of the hermit's friend (the good lay brother), attending her to Alloa ; when she explained to Lady Ruthven the cause of her strange arrival, she had then told her story with composure, till she mentioned her deliverer ; and then, for the first time, she felt a confusion, that disordered the animation with which she described his patriotism and his bravery. But it was natural, she thought ; gratitude for a recent benefit, made her heart beat high. It was something like the enthusiasm she had felt for Wallace, on the rescue of her father ; and she was satisfied. When a few days of quiet at Alloa had recovered her health from the shock it had received in the recent scenes, she had proposed to her aunt, to send some trusty messenger, to inform the imprisoned Earl of Dumbarton, of her happy refuge. Lady Ruthven, in return, had urged the probability that the messenger would be intercepted, and so her asylum be discovered. " Let it alone," continued she, " till this knight of yours, by performing his word, calls you to declare his honourable deeds. Till then, Lord Mar, ignorant of your danger, needs no assurance of your safety."

This casual reference to the knight, had then made the before tranquil heart of Helen, renew its throbbings ; and turning from her aunt with an acquiescing reply, she retired to her own apartment, to quell the unusual and painful blushes she felt burning on her cheeks. Why she should feel thus, she could not account, " unless," said she to herself, " I fear that my suspicion may be guessed at. Should my words, or looks, betray the royal Bruce to any harm, that moment of undesigned ingratitude, would be the last of my life."

This explanation, seemed an ample apology to herself. And henceforth, avoiding all mention of her preserver, in her conversations with Lady Ruthven, she had confined the subject to her own breast : and thinking that she thought of him more, by her attention to speak of him less, she wondered not, that whenever she was alone, his image immediately rose in her mind ; his voice seemed to sound in her ears ; and even as the summer air wafted its soft fragrance over her cheek, she would turn, as if she felt

that breath which had so gently hushed her to repose. She would then start and sigh, and repeat his words to herself: but all was then serene in her bosom. It seemed as if the contemplation of so much loveliness of soul, in so beautiful a form, soothed, instead of agitating her heart. "What a king will he be!" thought she: "with what transport, would the virtuous Wallace set the Scottish crown on so noble a brow."

Such were her meditations, and feelings, when she was brought a prisoner to Stirling. And when she heard of the victories of Wallace, she could not but think that the brave arm of her knight was there; and that he, with the renowned champion of Scotland, would fly on the receipt of her letter, to Stirling; there to repeat the valiant deeds of Dumbarton. The first blast of the Scottish trumpet under the walls, found her, as she had said, upon her knees; and kept her there: for hardly with any intermission, with fast and prayer, did she kneel before the altar of Heaven,—till the voice of Andrew Murray, at midnight, called her to freedom and to happiness.

Wallace, and perhaps her nameless hero with him, had again conquered!—His idea dwelt in her heart, and faltered on her tongue; and yet, in reciting the narrative of her late sufferings to her father, when she came to the mentioning of the stranger's conduct to her,—with an apprehensive embarrassment, she felt her augmented emotions, as she drew near the subject; and, hurrying over the event, she could only excuse herself for such new perturbation, by supposing that the former treason of Lady Mar, excited her alarm, for fear she should now fix it on a new object. Turning cold at an idea pregnant with such horror, she hastily passed from so agitating a theme, to speak of De Valence, and the respect with which he had treated her during her imprisonment. His courtesy had professed to deny nothing to her wishes, except her personal liberty, and any conference with her parents, or aunt. Her father's life, he said, was altogether out of his power to grant.—He might suspend the sentence, but he could not abrogate it.

"Yes," cried the Earl; "though false and inflexible, I

must not accuse him of having been so barbarous in his tyranny, as Cressingham. For it was not until De Valence was taken prisoner, that Joanna and I were divided. Till then we were lodged in decent apartments: but on that event, Cressingham tore us from each other, and threw us into different dungeons. My sister Janet, I never saw since the hour we were separated in the street of Stirling, until the awful minute in which we met on the roof of this castle; when I expected to behold her, and my wife, die before my eyes."

Helen now learned, for the first time, the base cruelties which had been exercised on her father, and his family, since the capture of De Valence. She had been exempted from sharing them, by the fears of Cressingham; who, knowing that the English earl had particular views with regard to her, durst not risk offending him, by outraging one whom he had declared himself determined to protect.

During part of this conversation, Murray withdrew to bring Lady Ruthven, and her son, to share the general joy of full domestic re-union. — The happy Edwin, and his mother, having embraced these dear relatives with yet more tender affections yearning in their bosoms, accompanied Murray to the door of the barbican, which contained Lord Ruthven. They entered, on the wings of conjugal, and filial love; but the, for once, pensive Lord Andrew, with a slow and musing step, returned into the castle, to see that all was safely disposed for the remainder of the night.

CHAPTER XXXV.

STIRLING CITADEL.

AT noon, next day, Murray received a message from Wallace, desiring him to tell the Earl of Mar, that he was coming to the citadel, to offer the palace of Snawdoun to the ladies of Mar; and to request the Earl, meanwhile, to

take charge of the illustrious prisoners he was bringing to the castle.

Each member of the family hastened to prepare for an interview, that excited different expectations in each different breast. Lady Mar, well satisfied that Helen and Wallace had never met; and clinging to the vague words of Murray, that he had sent to give *her* liberty; called forth every art of the toilet, to embellish her still fine person. Lady Ruthven, with the respectable eagerness of a chaste matron, in prospect of seeing the man who had so often been the preserver of her brother, and who had so lately delivered her husband from a loathsome dungeon, was the first who joined the earl in the great gallery. Lady Mar soon after entered, like Juno, in all her plumage of majesty and beauty.

But the trumpet of Wallace had sounded in the gates, before the trembling, half-fainting Helen could leave her room. It was the herald of his approach; and she sunk breathless into a seat. She was now going to see, for the first time, the man whose woes she had so often wept; the man who had incurred them all, for objects dear to her. He whom she had mourned, as one stricken in sorrows; and feared for, as an outlaw, doomed to suffering and to death; was now to appear before her, not in the garb of woe, which excites the sympathy its wearer excites, but arrayed as a conqueror; as the champion of Scotland, giving laws to her oppressors; and entering, in triumph, over fields of their slain!

Awful as this picture was, to the timidity of her gentle nature, it alone did not occasion that inexpressible sensation, which seemed to check the pulses of her heart. Was she, or was she not, to recognise in his train, the young and noble Bruce? Was she to be assured, that he still existed? Or, by seeking him every where in vain, be ascertained that he, who could not break his word, had perished, lonely, and unknown?

While these ideas thronged into her mind, the platform below was filling with the triumphant Scots; and, her door suddenly opening, Edwin entered in delighted haste:—
“Come, cousin!” cried he; “Sir William Wallace has

almost finished his business in the great hall. He has made my uncle governor of this place, and has committed nearly a thousand prisoners of rank to his care. If you be not expeditious, you will allow him to enter the gallery before you."

Hardly observing her face, from the happy emotions which dazzled his own eyes, he seized her hand, and hurried her to the gallery.

Only her aunt and step-mother were yet there. Lady Ruthven sat composedly, on a tapestried bench, awaiting the arrival of the company. But Lady Mar was near the door, listening impatiently to the voices beneath. At sight of Helen, she drew back; but she smiled exultingly, when she saw, that all the splendour of beauty she had so lately beheld, and dreaded, was fled. Her unadorned garments, gave no particular attraction to the simple lines of her form: the effulgence of her complexion was gone; her cheek was pale; and the tremulous motion of her step, deprived her of the elastic grace, which was usually the charm of her nymph-like figure.

Triumph now sat in the eyes of the Countess; and, with an air of authority, she waved Helen to take a seat beside Lady Ruthven. But Helen, fearful of what might be her emotion, when the train should enter, had just placed herself behind her aunt, when the steps of many a mailed foot sounded upon the oaken floor of the gallery. The next moment the great doors of the huge screen opened, and a crowd of knights in armour, flashed upon her eyes. A strange dimness overspread her faculties; and nothing appeared to her, but an indistinct throng approaching. She would have given worlds to have been removed from the spot, but was unable to stir; and on recovering her senses, she beheld Lady Mar, (who, exclaiming, "Ever my preserver!" had hastened forward,) now leaning on the bosom of one of the chiefs:—his head was bent, as if answering her in a low voice. By the golden locks, which hung down upon the jewelled tresses of the Countess, and obscured his face, she judged it must indeed be the deliverer of her father, the knight of her dream. But where was he, who had delivered herself, from a worse fate than death? Where

was the dweller of her daily thoughts, the bright apparition of her unslumbering pillow?

Helen's sight, now clearing to as keen a vision, as before it had been dulled and indistinct, with a timid and anxious gaze glanced from face to face of the chieftains around; but all were strange. Then withdrawing her eyes, with a sad conviction that their search was indeed in vain; in the very moment of that despair, they were arrested by a glimpse of the features of Wallace. He had raised his head; he shook back his clustering hair, and her secret was revealed. In that godlike countenance, she recognised the object of her devoted wishes! and with a gasp of overwhelming surprise, she must have fallen from her seat, had not Lady Ruthven, hearing a sound like the sigh of death, turned round, and caught her in her arms. The cry of her aunt drew every eye to the spot. Wallace immediately relinquished the Countess to her husband, and moved towards the beautiful and senseless form that lay on the bosom of Lady Ruthven. The Earl, and his agitated wife, followed.

“What ails my Helen?” asked the affectionate father.

“I know not,” replied his sister; “she sat behind me. I knew nothing of her disorder, till she fell as you see.”

Murray instantly supposed, that she had discovered the unknown knight; and looking from countenance, to countenance, amongst the train, to try if he could discern the envied cause of such emotions; he read in no face, an answering feeling with that of Helen's: and turning away from his unavailing scrutiny, on hearing her draw a deep sigh, his eyes fixed themselves on her, as if they would have read her soul. Wallace, who, in the pale form before him, saw, not only the woman, whom he had preserved with a brother's care; but the compassionate saint, who had given a hallowed grave to the remains of an angel, pure as herself; now hung over her, with an anxiety, so eloquent in every feature, that the Countess would willingly at that moment have stabbed her in every vein.

Lady Ruthven had sprinkled her niece with water; and as she began to recover, Wallace motioned to his chieftains to withdraw. Her eyes opened slowly; but recollection returning with every re-awakened sense, she dimly per-

ceived a press of people around her, and fearful of again encountering that face, which declared the Bruce of her secret meditations, and the Wallace of her declared veneration, were one; she buried her blushes in the bosom of her father. In that short point of time, images of past, present, and to come, rushed before her; and without confessing to herself, why she thought it necessary to make the vow, her soul seemed to swear on the sacred altar of a parent's heart, never more to think on either idea. Separate, it was sweet to muse on her own deliverer; it was delightful to dwell on the virtues of her father's preserver. But when she saw both characters blended in one, her feelings seemed sacrilege; and she wished even to bury her gratitude, where no eye but Heaven's could see its depth and fervour.

Trembling at what might be the consequences of this scene, Lady Mar determined to hint to Wallace, that Helen loved some unknown knight; and bending to her daughter, said in a low voice, yet loud enough for him to hear, "Retire, my child; you will be better in your own room; whether pleasure, or disappointment about the person you wished to discover in Sir William's train, have occasioned these emotions."

Helen blushed at this indelicate remark; and raising her head, with that modest dignity which only belongs to the purest mind, gently but firmly said, "I obey you, madam; and he whom I have seen, will be too generous, not to pardon the effects of so unexpected a weight of gratitude." As she spoke, her turning eye met the fixed gaze of Wallace. His countenance became agitated; and dropping on his knee beside her; "Gracious lady," cried he, "mine is the weight of gratitude; but it is dear and precious to me; a debt that my life will not be able to repay. I was ignorant of all your goodness, when we parted in the hermit's cave. But the spirit of an angel, like yourself, Lady Helen, will whisper to you, all her widowed husband's thanks." He pressed her hand fervently between his, and rising, left the room.

Helen looked on him with an immoveable eye, in which the heroic vow of her soul spoke in every beam; but as he

arose, even then she felt its frailty ; for her spirit seemed leaving her ; and as he disappeared from the door, her world seemed shut from her eyes. Not to think of him was impossible : how to think of him was in her own power. Her heart felt as if suddenly made a desert. But heroism was there. She had looked upon the Heaven-dedicated Wallace ; on the widowed mourner of Marion ; the saint and the hero ; the being of another world ! and as such, she would regard him ; till, in the realms of purity, she might acknowledge the brother of her soul !

A sacred inspiration seemed to illuminate her features ; and to brace, with the vigour of immortality, those limbs which before had sunk under her. She forgot she was still of earth, while a holy love, like that of the dove in Paradise, sat brooding on her heart.

Lady Mar gazed on her, without understanding the ethereal meaning of those looks. Judging from her own impassioned feelings, she could only resolve the resplendent beauty, which shone from the now animated face and form of Helen, into the rapture of finding herself beloved. Had she not heard Wallace declare himself to be the unknown knight who had rescued Helen ? she had heard him devote his life to her : and was not his heart included in that dedication ? She had then heard that love vowed to another, which she would have sacrificed her soul, to win !

Murray too was confounded ; but his reflections were far different from those of Lady Mar. He saw his newly self-discerned passion, smothered in its first breath. At the moment in which he found, that he loved his cousin above all of woman's mould, an unappealable voice in his bosom bade him crush every fond desire. That heart, which, with the chaste transports of a sister, had throbbled so entrancingly against his, was then another's ! was become the captive of Wallace's virtues ; of the only man, who, his judgment would have said, deserves Helen Mar ! — But when he clasped her glowing beauties in his arms only the night before, his enraptured soul then believed, that the tender smile he saw on her lips, was meant as the sweet earnest of the happier moment, when he might hold her there for ever ! That dream was now past. — “ Well !

be it so!" said he to himself; "if this too daring passion must be clipt on the wing, I have at least the consolation, that it soared like the bird of Jove! — But, loveliest of created beings," thought he, looking on Helen with an expression which, had she met it, would have told her all that was passing in his soul; "if I am not to be thy love; I will be thy friend — and live for thee and Wallace!"

Believing that she had read her sentence, in what she thought the triumphant glances of a happy passion; Lady Mar turned from her daughter-in-law, with such a hatred kindling in her heart, she durst not trust her eyes to the inspection of the by-standers. But her tongue could not be restrained, beyond the moment in which the object of her jealousy left the room. As the door closed upon Helen, who retired leaning on the arms of her aunt and Edwin; the Countess turned to her lord; his eyes were looking with doting fondness towards the point where she withdrew. This sight augmented the angry tumults in the breast of his wife; and with a bitter smile, she said, "So, my Lord, you find the icy-bosomed Helen can be thawed!"

"How do you mean, Joanna?" returned the Earl, doubting her words and looks; "you surely cannot blame our daughter, for being sensible of gratitude."

"I blame all young women," replied she, "who give themselves airs of unnatural coldness; and then, when the proof comes, behave in a manner as indelicate as extraordinary."

"My Lady Mar!" ejaculated the Earl, with an amazed look; "what am I to think of you, from this! How has my daughter behaved indelicately? She did not lay her head on Sir William Wallace's bosom and weep there, till he replaced her on her natural pillow, mine. Have a care, Madam, that I do not see more in this spleen, than would be honourable to you, for me to discover."

Fearing nothing so much, as that her husband should really suspect the passion which possessed her; and so remove her from the side of Wallace; she presently recalled her former duplicity, and with a surprised, and uncomprehending air, replied, "I do not understand what you mean, Donald." Then turning to Lord Ruthven, who stood un-

easily viewing this scene, "How," cried she, "can my Lord discover spleen, in my maternal anxiety respecting the daughter of the husband I love and honour, above all the earth? But men do not properly estimate female reserve. Any woman would say with me, that to faint at the sight of Sir William Wallace, was declaring an emotion not to be revealed before so large a company! a something, from which men might not draw the most agreeable inferences."

"It only declared surprise, Madam," cried Murray, "the surprise of a modest and ingenuous mind, that did not expect to recognise its mountain friend, in the person of the protector of Scotland."

Lady Mar put up her lip in contempt; and turning to the still silent Lord Ruthven, again addressed him. "Step-mothers, my Lord," said she, "have hard duties to perform; and when we think we fulfil them best, our husband comes with a magician's wand, and turns all our good to evil."

"Array your good in a less equivocal garb, my dear Joanna," answered the Earl of Mar, rather ashamed of the hasty words, which the suspicion of a moment had drawn from his lips; "judge my child, by her usual conduct; not by an accidental appearance of inconsistency; and I shall ever be grateful for your solicitude. But in this instance, though she might betray the weakness of an enfeebled constitution, it was certainly not the frailty of a love-sick heart."

"Judge me by your own rule, dear Donald," cried his wife, blandishly kissing his forehead; "and you will not again wither the mother of your boy, with such a look as I just now received!"

Glad to see this reconciliation, Lord Ruthven made a sign to Murray, and they withdrew together.

Meanwhile, the honest Earl, surrendering his whole heart to the wiles of his wife, poured into her not inattentive ear, all his wishes for Helen; all the hopes, to which her late meeting with Wallace, and their present recognition, had given birth.—"I had rather have that man my son," said he, "than see my beloved daughter placed on an imperial throne."

“ I do not doubt it,” thought Lady Mar; “ for there are many emperors, but only one William Wallace!” However, her sentiments she confined to herself; neither assenting nor dissenting, but answering so as to secure the confidence, by which she hoped to traverse his designs.

According to the inconsistency of the wild passion that possessed her, one moment she saw nothing but despair before her; and in the next, it seemed impossible that Wallace should in heart be proof against her tenderness and charms. She remembered Murray’s words, that he was sent to set her free! and that recollection re-awakened every hope. Sir William had placed Lord Mar in a post as dangerous as honourable. Should the Southrons return in any force into Scotland, Stirling must be one of the first places they would attack. The Earl was brave, but age had robbed him of much of his martial vigour: might she not then be indeed set free? And might not Wallace, on such an event, mean to repay her for all those sighs, he now sought to repress from ideas of a virtue, — which she could admire, but had not courage to imitate?

These wicked meditations, passed even at the side of her husband; and with a view to further every wish of her intoxicated imagination, she determined to spare no exertion to secure the support of her own family; which, when agreeing in one point, was the most powerful of any in the kingdom. Her father, the Earl of Strathearn, was now a misanthropic recluse in the Orkneys; she therefore did not calculate on his assistance; but she resolved on requesting Wallace to put the names of her cousins, Athol, and Badenoch, into the exchange of prisoners; for by their means she expected to accomplish all she hoped. On Mar’s probable speedy death, she had so long thought, that she now regarded it as a certainty; and so pressed forward to the fulfilment of her love and ambition, with as much eagerness as if he were already in his grave.

She recollected, that Wallace had not this time thrown her from his bosom, when, in the transports of her joy, she cast herself upon it: he only gently whispered, “ Beware, lady! there are present, who may think my services too richly paid!” With these words he had relinquished her

to her husband. But in them she saw nothing inimical to her wishes ; it was a caution, not a reproof ; and had not his warmer address to Helen, conjured up all the fiends of jealousy, she would have been perfectly satisfied with these grounds of hope.

Eager, therefore, to break away from Lord Mar's projects relating to his daughter ; at the first decent opportunity, she said—“ We will consider more of this, Donald. I now resign you to the duties of your office, and shall pay mine to her, whose interest is our own.”

Lord Mar pressed her hand to his lips, and they parted.

Prior to Wallace's visit to the citadel, which was to be at an early hour the same morning, a list of the noble prisoners was put into his hand. Edwin pointed to the name of Montgomery. “ That,” said he, “ is the name of a person you already esteem : but how will you regard him, when I tell you who he was ? ”

Wallace turned on him an enquiring look.

“ You have often spoken to me of Sir Gilbert Hambleton — ”

“ And this is he ! ” interrupted Wallace.

Edwin recounted the manner of the Earl discovering himself, and how he came to bear that title. Wallace listened in silence ; and when his young friend ended, sighed heavily.—“ I will thank him,” was all he said ; and rising, he proceeded to the chamber of Montgomery. Even at that early hour, it was filled with officers, come to enquire after their commander's health. Wallace advanced to the couch, and the Southrons drew back. The expression in his countenance told the Earl that he now knew him.

“ Noblest of Englishmen ! ” cried Wallace, in a low voice, “ I come to express a gratitude to you, as lasting as the memory of the action which gave it birth. Your generous conduct to all that was dearest to me on earth, was, that night, in the garden of Ellerslie, witnessed by myself. I was in the tree above your head ; and nothing but a conviction that I should embarrass the honour of my wife's protector, could, at that moment, have prevented my springing from my covert, and declaring my gratitude on the spot. Receive my thanks now, inadequate as they are, to express what I feel. But you offered me your heart on the

field of Cambus-Kenneth : I will take that as a generous intimation, how I may best acknowledge my debt. Receive then my never-dying friendship, the eternal gratitude of my immortal spirit !”

The answer of Montgomery could not but refer to the same subject ; and by presenting the tender form of his wife, and her devoted love, almost visibly again before her widowed husband, nearly forced open the fountain of tears which he had buried deep in his heart ; and rising suddenly, for fear his emotions might betray themselves, he warmly pressed the hand of his English friend, and left the room.

In the course of the same day, the Southron nobles were transported into the citadel ; and the family of Mar removed from the fortress, to take up their residence in the palace of Snawdoun.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CARSE OF STIRLING.

THE fame of these victories, the seizure of Stirling, the conquest of above sixty thousand men, and the Lord Warden with his late deputy taken prisoners ; all spread through the country, on the wings of the wind.

Messengers were despatched by Wallace, not only to the nobles who had already declared for the cause, by sending him their armed followers ; but to the clans, who yet stood irresolute. To the chiefs who had taken the side of Edward, he sent no exhortation. And when Lord Ruthven advised him to do so, “ No, my Lord,” said he ; “ we must not spread a snare under our feet. If these men could be affected by the interest of their country, and as they had the power to befriend her, they would not have collocated with her enemies. They remember her happiness, under the rule of our Alexanders ; they see her sufferings, beneath the sway of an usurper : and if they can know these things, and require arguments to bring them to their duty, should they then come to it, it would not be to fulfil but to betray.

Ours, my dear Ruthven, is a commission from Heaven. The truth of our cause, is God's own signet; and is so clear, that it need only to be seen, to be acknowledged. All honest minds will come to us of themselves; and those who are not so, had better be avoided, than shown the way by which treachery may effect, what open violence cannot accomplish."

This reasoning, drawn from the experience of nature, neither encumbered by the subtilities of policy, nor the sophistry of the schools, was evident to every understanding, and decided the question.

Lady Mar, unknown to any one, again applied to her fatal pen; but with other views than for the ruin of the cause, or the destruction of Wallace. It was to strengthen his hands, with the power of all her kinsmen; and finally, by the crown which they should place on his head, exalt her to the dignity of a queen. She wrote first to John Cummin, Earl of Buchan; enforcing a thousand reasons, why he should now leave a sinking cause, and join the rising fortunes of his country.

"You see," said she, "that the happy star of Edward is setting. The King of France, not only maintains possession of that monarch's territory of Guienne, but he holds him in check on the shores of Flanders. Baffled abroad, an insurrection awaits him at home; the priesthood, whom he has robbed, cover his name with anathemas: the nobles, whom he has insulted, trample on his prerogative; and the people, whose privileges he has invaded, call aloud for redress. The proud barons of England, are ready to revolt; and the Lords Hereford, and Norfolk, (those two earls whom, after madly threatening to hang*, he sought to bribe to their allegiance, by leaving them in the full powers of constable and mareschal of England,) they are now conducting themselves with such domineering consequence, that even the Prince of Wales submits to their directions; and the throne of the absent tyrant is shaken to its centre.

* Edward intended to send out forces to Guienne, under the command of Humphrey Earl of Hereford the constable, and Roger Earl of Norfolk the marshal, of England, when these two powerful nobles refused to execute his commands. A violent altercation ensued; and the King, in the height of his passion, exclaimed to the constable, "Sir Earl, by G—, you shall either go or hang."—"By G—, Sir King," replied Hereford, "I will neither go nor hang." And he immediately departed with the marshal and their respective trains.

“ Sir William Wallace has rescued Scotland from his yoke. The country now calls for her ancient lords—those who made her kings, and supported them. Come then, my cousin! espouse the cause of right; the cause that is in power; the cause that may aggrandise the house of Cummin, with still higher dignities, than any with which it has hitherto been blazoned.”

With these arguments, and with others more adapted to his Belial mind, she tried to bring him to her purpose; to awaken what ambition he possessed; and to entice his baser passions, by offering security in a rescued country, to the indulgence of senses to which he had already sacrificed the best properties of man. She despatched her letter by a messenger, whom she bribed to secrecy; and added in her postscript, that “ the answer she should hope to receive, would be an offer of his services to Sir William Wallace.”

While the Countess of Mar was devising her plans (for the gaining of Lord Buchan was only a preliminary measure), the despatches of Wallace had taken effect. Their simple details, and the voice of fame, had roused a general spirit throughout the land; and in the course of a very short time after the different messengers had left Stirling, the plain around the city was covered with a mixed multitude. All Scotland seemed pressing to throw itself at the feet of its preserver. A large body of men brought from Mar by Murray, according to his uncle's orders, were amongst the first encamped on the Carse; and that part of Wallace's own particular band, which he had left at Dumbarton to recover of their wounds, now, under the command of Stephen Ireland, rejoined their lord at Stirling.

Neil Campbell, the brave Lord of Loch-awe*, and Lord Bothwell, the father of Lord Andrew Murray, with a strong reinforcement, arrived from Argyleshire. The chiefs of Ross, Dundas, Gordon, Lockhart, Elphinstone, Scott, Erskine, Lindsay, Cameron, and of almost every noble family in Scotland, sent their sons at the head of detachments from their clans, to swell the victorious ranks of Sir William Wallace.

When this patriotic host assembled on the Carse of

* This true Scot was the noble ancestor of the present ducal family of Argyle.

Stirling, every inmate of the city, who had not duty to confine him within the walls, turned out to view the glorious sight. Mounted on a rising ground, they saw each little army; and the emblazoned banners of all the chivalry of Scotland, floating afar over the lengthened ranks.

At this moment, the lines which guarded the outworks of Stirling opened from right to left, and discovered Wallace, advancing on a white charger. When the conqueror of Edward's hosts appeared — the deliverer of Scotland, — a mighty shout, from the thousands around, rent the skies, and shook the earth on which they stood.

Wallace raised his helmet from his brow, as by an instinctive motion every hand bent the sword, or banner it contained.

“He comes in the strength of David!” cried the venerable Bishop of Dunkeld, who appeared at the head of his church's tenantry: “Scots, behold the Lord's anointed!”

The exclamation, which burst like inspiration from the lips of the Bishop, struck to every heart. “Long live King William!” was echoed with transport by every follower on the ground; and while the reverberating heavens seemed to ratify the voice of the people, the lords themselves (believing that he who won, had the best right to enjoy) joined in the glorious cry. Galloping up from the front of their ranks, they threw themselves from their steeds; and before Wallace could recover from the surprise into which this unexpected salutation had thrown him, Lord Bothwell and Lord Loch-awe, followed by the rest, had bent their knees, and acknowledged him to be their Sovereign. The Bishop of Dunkeld, at the same moment, drawing from his breast a silver dove of sacred oil, poured it upon the unbanded head of Wallace: “Thus, O King!” cried he, “do I consecrate on earth, what has already received the unction of Heaven!”

Wallace, at this action, was awe-struck, and raising his eyes to that Heaven, his soul in silence breathed its unutterable devotion. Then looking on the Bishop: — “Holy father,” said he, “this unction may have prepared my brows for a crown; but, it is not of this world; and Divine Mercy must bestow it. — Rise, lords;” and as he spoke, he flung

himself off his horse, and taking Lord Bothwell by the hand, as the eldest of the band, "Kneel not to me," cried he; "I am to you, what Gideon* was to the Israelites,—your fellow-soldier. I cannot assume the sceptre you would bestow; for he who rules us all, has yet preserved to you a lawful monarch. — Bruce lives. And were he extinct, the blood royal flows in too many noble veins in Scotland, for me to usurp its rights."

"The rights of the crown lie with the only man in Scotland who knows how to defend them! else reason is blind, or the nation abandons its own prerogative. What we have this moment vowed, is not to be forsworn. Baliol has abdicated our throne; the Bruce desert it; all our nobles slept till you awoke: and shall we bow to men who may follow, but will not lead? — No, bravest Wallace; from the moment you drew the first sword for Scotland, you made yourself her lawful king!"

Wallace turned to the veteran Lord of Loch-awe, who uttered this with a blunt determination, that meant to say, the election which had passed should not be recalled. "I made myself her champion: to fight for her freedom, not my own aggrandizement. Were I to accept the honour, with which this too grateful nation would repay my service, I should not bring it that peace for which I contend. Struggling for liberty, the toils of my brave countrymen would be redoubled; for they would have to maintain the rights of an unallied king, against an host of enemies. The circumstance of a man from the private stations of life being elevated to such dignity, would be felt as an insult by every royal house; and foes and friends would arm against us. On these grounds of policy, were I not loyal to the vows of my ancestors, I should repel the mischief you would bring upon yourselves by making me your king. As it is, my conscience, as well as my judgment, compels me to reject it. As your general, I may serve you gloriously; as your monarch, in spite of myself, I should incur your ultimate destruction."

* "The men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." — Judges, chap. viii.

“ From whom, noblest of Scots ? ” asked the Lord of Bothwell.

“ From yourselves, my friends,” answered Wallace, with a gentle smile. “ Could I take advantage of the generous enthusiasm of a grateful nation ; could I forget the duty I owe to the blood of our Alexanders, and leap into the throne ; there are many who would soon revolt against their own election. You cannot be ignorant, that there are natures who would endure no rule, did it not come by the right of inheritance : a right by which they hold their own pre-eminence ; and therefore will not dispute, lest they teach their inferiors the same refractory lesson. But to bend with voluntary subjection, to obey a power raised by themselves, would be a sacrifice abhorrent to their pride. After having displayed their efficiency, in making a king, they would prove their independence, by striving to pull him down, the moment he made them feel his sceptre.

“ Such would be the fate of this election. Jealousies, and rebellions, would mark my reign ; till even my closest adherents, seeing the miseries of civil war, would fall from my side, and leave the country again open to the inroads of her enemies.

“ These, my friends and countrymen, would be my reasons for rejecting the crown, did my ambition point that way. But as I have no joy in titles, no pleasure in any power that does not spring hourly from the heart ; let my reign be in your bosoms ; and with the appellation of your fellow-soldier, your friend ! I will fight for you, I will conquer for you, — I will live or die ! ”

“ This man,” whispered Lord Buchan, who, having arrived in the rear of the troops on the appearance of Wallace, advanced within hearing of what he said ; “ this man shows more cunning in repulsing a crown, than most are capable of exerting to obtain one.”

“ Ay, but let us see,” returned the Earl of March, who accompanied him, “ whether it be not Cesar’s coyness : he thrice refused the purple, and yet he died Emperor of the Romans ! ”

“ He that offers me a crown,” returned Buchan, “ shall never catch me playing the coquet with its charms. I war-

rant you, I would embrace the lovely mischief, in the first presentation." A shout rent the air. — "What is that?" cried he, interrupting himself.

"He has followed your advice," answered March, with a satirical smile; — "it is the preliminary trumpet to, Long live King William the Great!"

Lord Buchan spurred forward to Scrymgeour, whom he knew, and enquired "where the new king was to be crowned? We have not yet to thank him for the possession of Scone!"

"True," cried Sir Alexander, comprehending the sarcasm; "but did Sir William Wallace accept the prayers of Scotland, neither Scone, nor any other spot in the kingdom, should refuse the place of his coronation."

"Not accept them!" replied Buchan; "then why that shout? Do the changelings rejoice in being refused?"

"When we cannot gain the altitude of our desires," returned the knight, "it is yet subject for thankfulness, when we reach a step towards it. Sir William Wallace has consented to be considered as the Protector of the kingdom; to hold it for the rightful sovereign, under the name of Regent."

"Ay," cried March, "he has only taken a mistress, instead of a wife: — and trust me, when once he has got her into his arms, it will not be all the greybeards in Scotland, that can wrest her thence again. I marvel to see how men can be cajoled, and call the vizard virtue!"

Scrymgeour had not waited for this reply of the insolent Earl; and Buchan answering him; "I care not," cried he; "whoever keeps my castle over my head, and my cellars full, is welcome to reign over John of Buchan. So onward, my gallant Cospatrick, to make our bow to royalty in masquerade!"

When these scorners approached, they found Wallace standing uncovered in the midst of his happy nobles. There was not a man present, to whom he had not given proofs of his divine commission: each individual was snatched from a state of oppression, and disgrace, and placed in security and honour. With overflowing gratitude, they all thronged around him; and the young, the isolated Wallace,

found a nation waiting on his nod ; the hearts of half a million of people offered to his hand, to turn and wind them as he pleased. No crown sat on his brows : but the bright halo of true glory, beamed from his god-like countenance. It even checked the arrogant smiles with which the haughty March, and the voluptuous Buchan, came forward to mock him with their homage.

As the near relations of Lady Mar, he received them with courtesy ; but one glance of his eye, penetrated to the hollowness of both ; and then remounting his steed, the stirrups of which were held by Edwin and Ker, he touched the head of the former with his hand : “ Follow me, my friend ; I now go to pay my duty to your mother. — For you, my lords,” said he, turning to the nobles around, “ I shall hope to meet you at noon in the citadel ; where we must consult together on further prompt movements. Nothing with us can be considered as won, till all is gained.”

The chieftains, with bows, acquiesced in his mandate, and fell back towards their troops. But the foremost ranks of those brave fellows, having heard much of what had past, were so inflamed with admiration of their Regent, that they rushed forward ; and collecting in crowds around his horse, and in his path, some pressed to kiss his hand, and others his garments, while the rest ran in his way, shouting and calling down blessings upon him, till he stopped at the gate of Snawdoun.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SNAWDOUN PALACE.

OWING to the multiplicity of affairs which engaged Wallace's attention after the capture of Stirling, the ladies of Mar had not seen him since his first visit to the citadel. The Countess passed this time in writing her despatches to the numerous lords of her house, both in Scotland and in England ; and by her subtile arguments, she completely per-

sued her husband, of the cogency of putting the names of Lord Athol, and Lord Badenoch, into the list of noble prisoners he should request.

When this was proposed to Wallace, he recollected the conduct of Athol at Montrose; and being alone with Lord Mar, he made some objections against inviting him back into the country. But the Earl, who was prepared by his wife to overcome every obstacle in the way of her kinsman's return, answered, "That he believed, from the representations he had received of the private opinions both of Badenoch and Athol, that their treason was more against Baliol, than the kingdom; and that now that prince was irretrievably removed, he understood they would be glad to take a part in its recovery."

"That may be the case with the Earl of Badenoch," replied Wallace, "but something less friendly to Scotland, must be in the breast of the man who could betray Lord Douglas into the hands of his enemies."

"So I should have thought," replied the Earl, "had not the earnestness with which my wife pleads his cause, convinced me she knows more of his mind than she chooses to intrust me with; and therefore I suppose his conduct to Douglas arose from personal pique."

Though these explanations did not at all raise the absent lords in his esteem, yet to appear hostile to the return of Lady Mar's relations, was a violence to her, which (in proportion as Wallace shrunk from the guilty affection she was eager to lavish upon him) he was averse to committing. He wished, by showing her every proper respect, to lead her to apprehend the turpitude of her conduct. By supposing that his abhorrence of her advances had its origin in principle, rather than from personal repugnance to herself, she might see the foulness of her crime, and be recalled to virtue. He was therefore not displeased, to have this opportunity of obliging her; and as he hoped that amongst so many warm friends, a few cool ones could not do much injury, he gave in the names of Badenoch and Athol, with those of Lord Douglas, Sir William Maitland (the only son of the venerable knight of Thirlestane), Sir John Monteith, and many other brave Scots.

For these, the Earls De Warenne, De Valence, and Montgomery, the Barons Hilton and Blenkinsopp, and others of note, were to be exchanged. Those of lesser consequence, man for man, were to be returned for Scots of the same degree.

In arranging preliminaries, to effect the speedy return of the Scots from England (who must be known to have arrived on the borders, before the English would be permitted to re-cross them); in writing despatches on this subject, and on others of equal moment; had passed the time between the surrender of Stirling, and the hour when Wallace was called to the plain, to receive the offered homage of his grateful country.

Impatient to behold again the object of her fond machinations, Lady Mar hastened to the window of her apartment, when the shouts in the streets informed her of the approach of Wallace. The loud huzzas, accompanied by the acclamations of "Our Protector and Prince!" seemed already to bind her brows with her anticipated diadem; and for a moment, vanity lost the image of love, in the purple with which she enveloped it.

Her ambitious vision was disturbed by the crowd rushing forward: the gates were thronged with people of every age and sex; and Wallace himself appeared, on his white charger, with his helmet off, bowing and smiling upon the populace. There was a mild effulgence in his eye; a divine benevolence in his countenance, as his parted lips showed the brightness of his smile; which seemed to speak of happiness within, of joy to all around. She hastily snatched a chaplet of flowers from her head, and threw it from the window. Wallace looked up; his bow, and his smile, were then directed to her! but they were altered. The moment he met the gratulation of her eager eyes, he remembered what would have been the soft welcome of his Marion's, under the like circumstance! But that tender eye was closed; that ear was shut; to whom he would have wished these plaudits to have given rapture, — and they were now as nothing to him. The Countess saw not what was passing in his mind, but kissing her hand to him, disappeared from the window when he entered the palace.

Another eye besides Lady Mar's had witnessed the triumphant entry of Wallace. Triumphant in the true sense of the word ; for he came a victor over the hearts of men ; he came, not attended by his captives won in the war, but by the people he had blessed ; by throngs calling him preserver, father, friend, and prince ! By every title which can inspire the soul of man with the happy consciousness of fulfilling his embassy here below.

Helen was this witness. She had passed the long interval, since she had seen Wallace, in the state of one in a dream. The glance had been so transient, that every succeeding hour seemed to lessen the evidence of her senses, that she had really beheld him. It appeared impossible to her, that the man whom her thoughts had hitherto dwelt on as the widowed husband of Marion, as the hero whom sorrow had wholly dedicated to patriotism and to Heaven, should ever awaken in her breast, feelings, which would seem to break like a sacrilegious host, upon the holy consecration of his. Once, she had contemplated his idea with the pensive impressions of one leaning over the grave of a hero : and she could then turn, as if emerging from the glooms of sepulchral monuments to upper day, to the image of her unknown knight ! she could then blamelessly, recollect the matchless graces of his figure ; the noble soul that breathed from his every word and action ; the sweet, though thoughtful, serenity that sat on his brow ! " There," whispered she to herself, " are the lofty meditations of a royal mind, devising the freedom of his people. When that is effected, how will the perfect sunshine break out from that face. Ah ! how blest must Scotland be under his reign, when all will be light, virtue, and joy !" Bliss hovered like an angel over the image of this imaginary Bruce ; while sorrow, in mourning weeds, seemed ever dropping tears, when any circumstance recalled that of the real Wallace.

Such was the state of Helen's thoughts, when in the moment of her beholding the chief of Ellerslie in the citadel, she recognised, in his expected melancholy form, the resplendent countenance of him whom she supposed the Prince of Scotland.—That two images so opposite, should

at once unite ; that in one bosom, should be mingled all the virtues, she had believed peculiar to each ; struck her with overwhelming amazement. — But when she recovered from her short swoon, and found Wallace at her feet ; when she felt that all the devotion her heart had hitherto paid to the simple idea of virtue alone, would now be attracted to that glorious mortal, in whom all human excellence appeared summed up ; she trembled under an emotion, that seemed to rob her of herself, and place a new principle of being within her.

All was so extraordinary, so unlooked for, so bewildering, that from the moment she retired in such a paroxysm of highly wrought feelings from her first interview in the gallery with him, she became altogether like a person in a trance ; and hardly answering her aunt, when she led her up the stairs, only complained she was ill, and threw herself upon a couch.

At the very time that her heart told her, in a language she could not misunderstand, that she irrevocably loved this too glorious, too amiable Wallace ; it as powerfully denounced to her, that she had devoted herself to one, who would ever be to her as a being of air. No word of sympathy would ever whisper felicity to her heart ; no—the flame that was within her, (which she found would be immortal, as the vestal fires which resembled its purity,) must burn there unknown ; hidden, but not smothered.

“ Were this a god,” cried she to herself, as she laid her throbbing head upon her pillow, “ how gladly should I feel these emotions ! For, could I not fall down and worship him ? Could I not think it a world of bliss, to live for ever within the influence of his virtues : looking at him, listening to him, rejoicing in his praises, happy in his happiness ; though I should be invisible, and he not know, that Helen Mar even existed ! And I may live thus,” said she ; “ I may steal some portion of the rare lot that was Lady Marion’s—to die for such a man ! Ah, could I be in Edwin’s place ; and wait upon his smiles ! But that may not be : I am a woman, and formed to suffer in silence and seclusion. But even at a distance, brave Wallace, my spirit shall watch over you in the form of this Edwin ; I

will teach him a double care of the light of Scotland. And my prayers also, shall follow you ; so that when we meet in heaven, the blessed Virgin shall say with what hosts of angels her intercessions, through my vigils, have surrounded you !”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BOWER, OR LADIES' APARTMENT.

THUS did Helen commune with her own strangely affected heart : sometimes doubting the evidence of her eyes ; then, convinced of their fidelity, striving to allay the tumults in her mind. She seldom appeared from her own rooms. And such retirement was not questioned, her father being altogether engaged at the citadel ; the Countess absorbed in her own speculations ; and Lady Ruthven alone, interrupting the solitude of her niece by frequent visits. Little suspecting the cause of Helen's prolonged indisposition, she generally selected Wallace for the subject of her conversation. She descanted with enthusiasm on the rare perfection of his character ; told her, all that Edwin had related of his actions, from the taking of Dumbarton, to the present moment ; and then bade Helen remark the miracle, of such wisdom, valour, and goodness, being found in one so young and handsome.

“Why, my dear,” added she “depend on it, before he was Lady Marion's husband, he must have heard sighs enough, from the love-sick damsels about him, to have turned the brains of half the male world. There is something in his very look, did you meet him on a heath, without better garb than a shepherd's plaid, sufficient to declare him the noblest of men ;—and, methinks, would excuse the gentlest* lady in the land, for leaving hall and bower to share his sheep-cote. But, alas !” and then the

* *Gentlest* is here used in the Scottish and old English sense ; meaning of the noblest blood.

playful expression of her countenance altered ; “ he is now, for none on earth ! ”

With these words she turned the subject to the confidential hours he passed with the young adopted brother of his heart. Every fond emotion seemed then centered in his wife and child. When Lady Ruthven repeated his pathetic words to Edwin, she wept ; she even sobbed, and paused to recover ; while the deep and silent tears, which flowed from the heart, to the eyes of Lady Helen, bathed the side of the couch on which she leaned.

“ Alas ! ” cried Lady Ruthven, “ that a man, so formed to grace every relation in life ; so noble a creature, in all respects ; so fond a husband, so full of parental tenderness ; that he should be deprived of the wife, on whom he doted ; that he should be cut off from all hope of posterity : — that, when he shall die, nothing will be left of William Wallace, breaks my heart ! ”

“ Ah, my aunt, ” cried Helen, raising her head with animation, “ will he not leave behind him the liberty of Scotland ? That is an offspring, worthy of his godlike soul. ”

“ True, my dear Helen : but had you ever been a parent, you would know that no achievements, however great, can heal the wound made in a father’s heart, by the loss of a beloved child. And though Sir William Wallace never saw the infant, ready to bless his arms, yet it perished in the bosom of its mother ; and that circumstance must redouble his affliction : horribly, does it enhance the cruelty of the deed ! ”

“ He has in all things been a direful sacrifice, ” returned Helen : “ and with God alone dwells the power to wipe the tears from his heart. ”

“ They flow not from his eyes, ” answered her aunt ; “ but deep, deep is the grief, that, my Edwin says, is settled there. ”

While Lady Ruthven was uttering these words, shouts in the streets made her pause ; and soon recognising the name of Wallace, sounding from the lips of the rejoicing multitude, she turned to Helen : “ Here comes our deliverer ! ” cried she, taking her by the hand ; “ we have not seen him,

since the first day of our liberty. It will do you good, as it will me, to look on his beneficent face!"

She obeyed the impulse of her aunt's arm, and reached the window just as he passed into the court-yard. Helen's soul seemed rushing from her eyes. "Ah! it is indeed he!" thought she; "no dream, no illusion, but his very self."

He looked up: but not on her side of the building; it was to the window of Lady Mar; and as he bowed, he smiled. All the charms of that smile struck upon the soul of Helen; and hastily retreating, she sunk breathless into a seat.

"O, no! that man cannot be born for the isolated state I have just lamented. He is not to be for ever cut off from communicating that happiness, to which he would give so much enchantment!" Lady Ruthven ejaculated this with fervour; her matron cheeks, flushing with a sudden and more forcible admiration of the person and mien of Wallace. "There was something in that smile, Helen, which tells me, all is not chilled within. And, indeed, how should it be otherwise? That generous interest in the happiness of all, which seems to flow in a tide of universal love, cannot spring from a source incapable of dispensing the softer streams of it again."

Helen, whose well poised soul was not affected by the agitations of her body, (agitations, she was determined to conquer,) calmly answered—"Such a hope little agrees with all you have been telling me of his conversations with Edwin. Sir William Wallace will never love woman more; and even to name the idea, is an offence against the sacredness of his sorrow."

"Blame me not, Helen," returned Lady Ruthven, "that I forgot probability, in grasping at a possibility which might give me such a nephew as Sir William Wallace, and you, a husband worthy of your merits! I had always, in my own mind, fixed on your unknown knight, for your future lord; and now, that I find he, and the deliverer of Scotland are one, I am not to be looked grave at, for wishing to reward him with the most precious heart that ever beat in a female breast."

“No more of this, if you love me, my dear aunt!” returned Helen; “it neither can nor ought to be. I revere the memory of Lady Marion too much, not to be agitated by the subject; so, no more!—” she was agitated. But at that instant Edwin, throwing open the door, put an end to the conversation.

He came to apprise his mother, that Sir William Wallace was in the state-apartments: come, purposely, to pay his respects to her, not having even been introduced to her, when the sudden illness of her niece in the castle had made them part so abruptly.

“I will not interrupt his introduction now,” said Helen, with a faint smile; “a few days’ retirement will strengthen me, and then, I shall see our protector as I ought.”

“I will stay with you,” cried Edwin, “and I dare say Sir William Wallace will have no objection to be speedily joined by my mother; for, as I came along, I met my aunt Mar, hastening through the gallery: and, between ourselves, my sweet coz, I do not think my noble friend quite likes a private conference with your fair step-mother.”

Lady Ruthven had withdrawn before he made this observation.

“Why, Edwin? surely she would not do any thing ungracious, to one, to whom she owes so great a weight of obligations?” When Helen asked this, she remembered the spleen Lady Mar once cherished against Wallace; and, she feared, it might now have revived.

“Ungracious! O, no! the reverse of that: but her gratitude is full of absurdity.—I will not repeat the fooleries, with which she sought to detain him at Bute.—And that some new fancy respecting him, is now about to menace his patience, I am convinced; for, in my way hither, I met her hastening along, and as she passed me she exclaimed, ‘Is Lord Buchan arrived?’ I answered, ‘Yes.’—‘Ah, then he has made him king!’ cried she; and into the great gallery she darted.”

“You do not mean to say,” demanded Helen, turning her eyes with an expression, which seemed confident of his answer, “that Sir William Wallace has accepted the crown of Scotland?”

“Certainly not,” replied Edwin; “but, as certainly, it has been offered to him, and he has refused it.”

“I could have sworn it!” returned Helen, rising from her chair; “all is loyal, all is great, and consistent there, Edwin!”

“He is indeed the perfect exemplar of all nobleness,” rejoined the youth; “and I believe, I shall even love you better, my dear cousin, because you seem to have so clear an apprehension of his real character.” He then proceeded, with all the animation of the most zealous affection, to narrate to Helen the particulars of the late scene on the Carse of Stirling. And while he deepened still more the profound impression the virtues of Wallace had made on her heart, he re-opened its more tender sympathies, by repeating, with even minuter accuracy than he had done to his mother, details of those hours which he passed with him in retirement. He spoke of the beacon-hill; of moonlight walks in the camp, when all but the sentinels, and his general and himself, were sunk in sleep.

These were the seasons when the suppressed feelings of Wallace would, by fits, break from his lips; and, at last, pour themselves out, unrestrainedly, to the ear of sympathy. As the young narrator described all the endearing qualities of his friend; the cheerful heroism, with which he quelled every tender remembrance, to do his duty in the day,—“for it is only in the night,” said Edwin, “that my general remembers Ellerslie,”—Helen’s tears again stole silently down her cheeks: Edwin perceived them, and throwing his arms gently around her, “Weep not, my sweet cousin,” said he, “for with all his sorrow, I never saw true happiness, till I beheld it in the eyes, and heard it in the voice, of Sir William Wallace. He has talked to me, of the joy he should experience, in giving liberty to Scotland, and establishing her peace,—till his enthusiastic soul, grasping hope, as if it were possession, he has looked on me with a consciousness of enjoyment which seemed to say, that all bliss was summed up in a patriot’s breast.

“And at other times, when after a conversation on his beloved Marion, a few natural regrets would pass his lips, and my tears tell how deep was my sympathy, then he

would turn to comfort me ; then he would show me, the world beyond this—that world, which is the aim of all his deeds, the end of all his travails ; and, lost in the rapturous ideas of meeting his Marion there, a foretaste of all would seem to seize his soul : and were I then called upon to point out the most enviable felicity on earth, I should say it is that of Sir William Wallace. It is this enthusiasm in all he believes and feels, that makes him what he is. It is this eternal spirit of hope, infused into him by Heaven itself, that makes him rise from sorrow, like the sun from a cloud, brighter, and with more ardent beams. It is this, that bathes his lips in the smiles of Paradise ; that throws a divine lustre over his eyes, and makes all dream of love and happiness that look upon him.”

Edwin paused :—“ Is it not so, my cousin ? ”

Helen raised her thoughtful face.—“ He is not a being of this earth, Edwin. We must learn to imitate him as well as to —— ” She hesitated, and then added, “ as well as to revere him. I do revere him : with such a sentiment as fills my heart, when I bend before the altars of the saints. But not to worship,” said she, interrupting herself ; “ that would be a crime. To look on him, as a glorious example of patient suffering ; of invincible courage, in the behalf of truth and mercy ! This is the end of my reverence of him ; and this sentiment, my dear Edwin, you partake.”

“ It possesses me wholly,” cried the energetic youth ; “ I have no thought, no wish ; nor ever move or speak, but with the intent to be like him. He calls me his brother ! and I will be so in soul, though I cannot in blood ; and then, my dear Helen, you shall have two Sir William Wallaces to love ! ”

“ Sweetest, sweetest boy ! ” cried Helen, putting her quivering lips to his forehead, “ you will then always remember, that Helen so dearly loves Scotland, as to be jealous, above all earthly things, for the Lord Regent’s safety. Be his guardian angel. Beware of treason, in man, and woman, friend and kindred. It lurks, my cousin, under the most specious forms ; and, as one, mark Lord Buchan : in short, have a care of all, whom any of the house

of Cummin may introduce. Watch over your general's life, in the private hour. It is not the public field, I fear for him ; his valiant arm will there be his own guard ! But, in the unreserved day of confidence, envy will point its dagger ; and then, be as eyes to his too trusting soul, as a shield to his too confidently exposed breast !”

As she spoke, she strove to conceal her too eloquent face in the silken ringlets of her hair.

“ I will be all this,” cried Edwin, who saw nothing in her tender solicitude but the ingenuous affection which glowed in his own heart ; “ and I will be your eyes, too, my cousin : for when I am absent with Sir William Wallace, I shall consider myself your representative ; and so will send you regular despatches of all that happens to him.”

Thanks would have been a poor means of imparting what she felt at this assurance ; and rising from her seat, with some of Wallace's own resigned and enthusiastic expression in her face, she pressed Edwin's hand to her heart ; then bowing her head to him, in token of gratitude, withdrew into an inner apartment.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

STIRLING CASTLE, AND COUNCIL HALL.

THE Countess's chivalric tribute from the window gave Wallace reason to anticipate her company in his visit to Lady Ruthven ; and on finding the room vacant, he despatched Edwin for his mother, that he might not be distressed by the unchecked advances of a woman, whom, as the wife of Lord Mar, he was obliged to see, and whose weakness he pitied, as she belonged to a sex for which, in consideration of the felicity once bestowed on him by woman, he felt a peculiar tenderness. Respect the Countess he could not ; nor, indeed, could he feel any gratitude for a preference which seemed to him to have no foundations in the only true basis of love—the virtues of the object. For

as she acted against every moral law, against his declared sentiments, it was evident that she placed little value on his esteem ; and therefore he despised, while he pitied, a human creature ungovernably yielding herself to the sway of her passions.

In the midst of thoughts so little to her advantage, Lady Mar entered the room. Wallace turned to meet her ; while she, hastening towards him, and dropping on one knee, exclaimed, " Let me be the first woman in Scotland to acknowledge its king ! "

Wallace put forth his hand to raise her ; and, smiling, replied, " Lady Mar, you would do me an honour I can never claim. "

" How ? " cried she, starting on her feet. " What, then, was that cry I heard ? Did they not call you ' prince,' and ' sovereign ? ' Did not my Lord Buchan ——— "

Confused, disappointed, overpowered, she left the sentence unfinished, sunk on a seat, and burst into tears. At that moment, she saw her anticipated crown fall from her head ; and having united the gaining of Wallace with his acquisition of this dignity, all her hopes seemed again the sport of winds. She felt as if Wallace had eluded her power ; for it was by the ambition-serving acts of her kinsman that she had meant to bind him to her love ; and now all was rejected, and she wept in despair. He gazed at her with amazement. What these emotions and his elevation had to do with each other, he could not guess ; but, recollecting her manner of mentioning Lord Buchan's name, he answered, " Lord Buchan I have just seen. He and Lord March came upon the Carse, at the time I went thither to meet my gallant countrymen ; and these two noblemen, though so lately the friends of Edward, united with the rest in proclaiming me Regent. "

This word dried the tears of Lady Mar. She saw the shadow of royalty behind it ; and summoning an artifice she had ever at her command, to conceal the joy of her heart, she calmly said, " Do not too severely condemn this weakness : it is not that of vain wishes for your aggrandisement. You are the same to Joanna Mar, whether as a monarch or a private man, as long as you possess that

supremacy in all excellence which first gained her esteem. It is for Scotland's sake alone, that I wish you her king. You have taught me to forget all selfish desires, to respect myself," cried she; "and, from this hour, I conjure you to wipe from your memory all my folly—all my love—"

With the last word her bosom heaved tumultuously, and she rose in agitation. Wallace now gazed on her with redoubled wonder. She saw it; and hearing a foot in the passage, turned, and, grasping his hand, said, in a soft and hurried tone, "Forgive that what is entwined with my heart should cost me some pangs to wrest thence again: only respect me, and I am comforted." Wallace in silence pressed her hand, and the door opened.

Lady Ruthven entered. The Countess, whose present aim was to throw the virtue of Wallace off its guard, and to take that by sap which she found resisted open attack, with a penitential air disappeared by another passage. Edwin's gentle mother was followed by the same youth who had brought Helen's packet to Berwick. It was Walter Hay, anxious to be recognised by his benefactor, to whom his recovered health had rendered his person strange. Wallace received him with kindness, and told him to bear his grateful respects to his lady, for her care of her charge. Lord Ruthven, with others, soon entered; and, at the appointed hour, they attended their chief to the citadel.

The council hall was already filled with the lords who had brought their clans to the Scottish standard. On the entrance of Wallace, they rose; and Mar coming forward, followed by the heralds and other officers of ceremony, saluted him with the due forms of Regent, and led him to the throne. Wallace ascended; but it was only to take thence a packet, which had been deposited for him on its cushion; and coming down again, he laid the parchment on the council-table.

"I can do all things best," said he, "when I am upon a level with my friends." He then broke the seal of the packet. It was from the Prince of Wales, agreeing to Wallace's proposed exchange of prisoners, but denouncing him as the instigator of the rebellion, and threatening him with a future judgment from his incensed king, for the mischief

he had wrought in the realm of Scotland. The letter was finished with a demand, that the town and citadel of Berwick should be surrendered to England, as a gage for the quiet of the borders till Edward should return.

Kirkpatrick scoffed at the audacious menace of the young prince. "He should come amongst us, like a man," cried he; "and we would soon show him, who it is that works mischief in Scotland! Ay, even on his back, we would write the chastisement due to the offender."

"Be not angry with him, my friend," returned Wallace; "these threats are words of course from the son of Edward. Did he not fear both our rights, and our arms, he would not so readily accord with our propositions. You see, every Scottish prisoner is to be on the borders by a certain day! and, to satisfy that impatient valour, (which I never check, but when it loses itself in a furor, too nearly resembling [that of our enemies;]) I intend to make your prowess once again the theme of their discourse. You shall retake your castles in Annandale."

"Give me but the means to recover those stout gates of my country," cried Kirkpatrick, "and I will warrant you to keep the keys in my hand till doomsday."

Wallace resumed: "Three thousand men are at your command. When the prisoners pass each other on the Cheviots, the armistice will terminate. You may then fall back upon Annandale; and, that night, light your own fires in Torthorald. Send the expelled garrisons into Northumberland, and show this haughty prince that we know how to replenish his depopulated towns."

"But first I will set my mark on them!" cried Kirkpatrick, with one of those laughs, which ever precluded some savage proposal.

"I can guess, it would be no gentle one," returned Wallace: "Why, brave knight, will you ever sully the fair field of your fame, with an ensanguined tide?"

"It is the fashion of the times," replied Kirkpatrick, roughly: "you only, my victorious general, who, perhaps, had most cause to go with the stream, have chosen a path of your own. But look around! see our burns, which the Southrons made run with Scottish blood; our hillocks,

sworn with the cairns of our slain ; the highways blocked up with the graves of the murdered ; our lands filled with maimed clansmen, who purchased life of our ruthless tyrants, by the loss of eyes and limbs ! And, shall we talk of gentle methods, with the perpetrators of these horrors ? Sir William Wallace, you would make women of us."

" Shame, shame ! Kirkpatrick !" resounded from every voice, " you insult the Regent !"

Kirkpatrick stood proudly frowning, with his left hand on the hilt of his sword. Wallace, by a motion, hushed the tumult, and spoke — " No true chief of Scotland can offer me greater respect, than frankly to trust me with his sentiments."

" Though we disagree in some points," cried Kirkpatrick, " I am ready to die for you at any time ; for I believe a trustier Scot treads not the earth ; but I repeat, why, by this mincing mercy, seek to turn your soldiers into women ?"

" I seek to make them men," replied Wallace ; " to be aware that they fight with fellow-creatures, with whom they may one day be friends ; and not like the furious savages of old Scandinavia, drink the blood of eternal enmity. I would neither have my chieftains set examples of cruelty, nor degrade themselves by imitating the barbarities of our enemies. That Scotland bleeds at every pore, is true ; but let peace be our aim, and we shall heal all her wounds."

" Then I am not to cut off the ears of the freebooters in Annandale ?" cried Kirkpatrick, with a good-humoured smile : " Have it as you will, my general ; only, you must new christen me, to wash the war-stain from my hand. The rite of my infancy was performed as became a soldier's son : my fount was my father's helmet ; and the first pap I sucked lay on the point of his sword."*

" You have not shamed your nurse !" cried Murray.

" Nor will I," answered Kirkpatrick, " while the arm that slew Cressingham remains unwithered."

While he spoke, Ker entered, to ask permission to intro-

* All who are conversant with the traditionary accounts of the ancient Scottish manners, must be well acquainted with these barbarous customs. They were employed to perpetuate a ferocity against their enemies, similar to that which was inculcated by resembling means into the young Hannibal.

duce a messenger from Earl de Warenne. Wallace gave consent. It was Sir Hugh le de Spencer, a near kinsman of the Earl of Hereford, the tumultuary constable of England. He was the envoy who had brought the Prince of Wales's despatches to Stirling. Wallace was standing when he entered, and so were the chieftains, but at his appearance they sat down. Wallace retained his position.

"I come," cried the Southron knight, "from the Lord Warden of Scotland; who, like my prince, too greatly condescends, to do otherwise than command, where now he treats; I come to the leader of this rebellion, William Wallace, to receive an answer to the terms granted by the clemency of my master, the son of his liege lord, to this misled kingdom."

"Sir Knight," replied Sir William Wallace, "when the Southron lords delegate a messenger to me, who knows how to respect the representative of the nation to which he is sent, and the agents of his own country, I shall give them my reply. You may withdraw."

The Southron stood, resolute to remain where he was: "Do you know, proud Scot," cried he, "to whom you dare address this imperious language? I am the nephew of the lord high constable of England."

"It is pity," cried Murray, looking coolly up from the table, "that he is not here to take his kinsman into custody!"

Le de Spencer fiercely half drew his sword: "Sir, this insult —"

"Must be put up with," cried Wallace, interrupting him, and motioning Edwin to lay his hand on the sword; "you have insulted the nation to which you were sent on a peaceful errand; and having thus invited the resentment of every chief here present, you cannot justly complain against their indignation. But in consideration of your youth, and probable ignorance of what becomes the character of an ambassador, I grant you the protection your behaviour has forfeited. Sir Alexander Scrymgeour," said he, turning to him, "you will guard Sir Hugh le de Spencer to the Earl de Warenne; and tell that nobleman I am ready to answer any proper messenger."

The young Southron, frowning, followed Scrymgeour from the hall; and Wallace, turning to Murray, "My friend," said he, "it is not well to stimulate insolence, by repartee. This young man's speech, though an insult to the nation, was directed to me; and by me only, it ought to have been answered; and that seriously. In all transactions, whether great or small, we should never give a needless irritation to our enemy. The haughty spirit of this man should have been quelled, not incensed; and, had you proceeded one word farther, you would have given him an apparently just cause of complaint against you; and, of that my friend, I am most sensibly jealous. It is not policy, nor virtue, to be rigorous to the extent of justice."

"I know," returned Murray, blushing, "that my wits are too many for me; ever throwing me, like Phaeton's horses, into the midst of some fiery mischief. But pardon me now, and I promise to rein them close, when next I see this prancing knight."

"Bravo, my Lord Andrew!" cried Kirkpatrick, in an affected whisper, "I am not always to be bird alone, under the whip of our Regent; you have had a few stripes, and now look a little of my feather!"

"Like as a swan to a vulture, good Roger," answered Murray.

Wallace attended not to this tilting of humour between the chieftains, but engaged himself in close discourse with the elder nobles, at the higher end of the hall. In half an hour, Scrymgeour returned, and with him Baron Hilton. He brought an apology from De Warenne, for the behaviour of his ambassador; and added his persuasions to the demands of England, that the Regent would surrender Berwick, not only as a pledge for the Scots keeping the truce on the borders, but as a proof of his confidence in prince Edward.

Wallace answered, that he had no reason to show extraordinary confidence in one, who manifested, by such a requisition, that he had no faith in Scotland; and therefore, neither as a proof of confidence, nor as a gage of her word, should Scotland, a victorious power, surrender the eastern door of her kingdom, to the vanquished. Wallace declared himself ready to dismiss the English prisoners to

the frontiers, and to maintain the armistice till they had reached the south side of the Cheviots: "But," added he, "my word must be my bond; for by the honour of Scotland, I will give no other."

"Then," answered Baron Hilton, with an honest flush passing over his cheek, as if ashamed of what he had next to say, "I am constrained to lay before you, the last instructions of the Prince of Wales to Earl de Warenne."

He took a royally sealed roll of vellum from his breast, and read aloud:

"Thus saith Edward Prince of Wales, to Earl de Warenne, Lord Warden of Scotland. If that arch-rebel, William Wallace, who now assumeth to himself the rule of all our royal father's hereditary dominions north of the Cheviots, refuseth to give unto us the whole possession of the town and citadel of Berwick-upon-Tweed, as a pledge of his faith, to keep the armistice on the borders from sea to sea; we command you to tell him, that we shall detain under the ward of our good lieutenant of the Tower in London, the person of William the Lord Douglas, as a close captive; until our prisoners, now in Scotland, arrive safely at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This mark of supremacy over a rebellious people, we owe, as a pledge of their homage to our royal father; and as a tribute of our gratitude to him, for having allowed us to treat at all with so undutiful a part of his dominions. (Signed) Edward, P. W."

"Baron," cried Wallace, "it would be beneath the dignity of Scotland to retaliate this act with the like conduct. The exchange of prisoners shall yet be made, and the armistice held sacred on the borders. But as I hold the door of war open in the interior of the country, before the Earl de Warenne leaves this citadel, (and it shall be on the day assigned;) please the Almighty Lord of Justice, the Southron usurpers of all our castles on the eastern coast, shall be our hostages for the safety of Lord Douglas!"

"And this is my answer, noble Wallace!"

"It is: and you see no more of me till that which I have said is done."

Baron Hilton withdrew. And Wallace, turning to his peers, rapidly made dispositions for a sweeping march from

frith to frith ; and having sent those, who were to accompany him, to prepare for departure next day at dawn ; he retired with the lords Mar and Bothwell to arrange affairs relative to the prisoners.

CHAPTER XL.

THE GOVERNOR'S APARTMENTS.

THE sun rose on Wallace and his brave legions, as they traversed the once romantic glades of Strathmore ; but now the scene was changed. The villages were abandoned, and the land lay around in uncultivated wastes. Sheep, without a shepherd, fled wild from the approach of man ; and wolves issued, howling, from the cloisters of depopulated monasteries. The army approached Dumblane ; but it was without inhabitant ; grass grew in the streets ; and the birds which roosted in the desert dwellings flew scared from the windows as the trumpet of Wallace sounded through the town. Loud echoes repeated the summons from its hollow walls ; but no other voice was heard, no human face appeared ; for the ravening hand of Cressingham had been there ! Wallace sighed as he looked around him. " Rather smile," cried Graham, " that Heaven hath given you the power to say to the tyrants who have done this, ' Here shall your proud waves be stayed ! ' "

They proceeded over many a hill and plain, and found that the same withering touch of desolation had burnt up and overwhelmed the country. Wallace saw that his troops were faint for want of food ; cheering them, he promised that Ormsby should provide them a feast in Perth ; and, with re-awakened spirits, they took the river Tay at its fords, and were soon before the walls of that well-armed city. But it was governed by a coward ; and Ormsby fled to Dundee at the first sight of the Scottish army. His flight might have warranted the garrison to surrender without a blow ; but a braver man being his lieutenant, sharp was the conflict before Wallace could

compel that officer to abandon the ramparts, and to sue for the very terms he had at first rejected.

After the fall of Perth the young Regent made a rapid progress through that part of the country; driving the Southron garrisons out of Scone, and all the embattled towns; expelling them from the castles of Kincairn, Elcho, Kinfauns, and Doune; and then proceeding to the marine fortresses (those avenues by which the ships of England had poured their legions on the eastern coast); he compelled Dundee, Cupar, Glamis, Montrose, and Aberdeen, all to acknowledge the power of his arms. He seized most of the English ships in these ports; and manning them with Scots soon cleared the seas of the vessels which had escaped, taking some, and putting others to flight; and in one of the latter was the fugitive Ormsby.

This enterprise achieved, Wallace, with a host of prisoners, turned his steps towards the Forth; but ere he left the banks of the Tay he detached 3000 men, and putting them under the command of Lord Ruthven, gave him a commission to range the country from the Carse of Gowrie to remotest Sutherland; and in all that tract reduce every town and castle which had admitted a Southron garrison. Wallace took leave of Lord Ruthven at Huntingtower; and that worthy nobleman, when he assumed, with the government of Perth, this extensive command, said, as he grasped the Regent's hand, "I say not, bravest of Scots, what is my gratitude for thus making me an arm of my country, but deeds will show!"*

He then bade a father's adieu to his son, counselling him to regard Wallace as the light in his path; and, embracing him, they parted.

A rapid march, round by Fifeshire, (through which victory followed their steps,) brought the conqueror, and his troops, again within sight of the towers of Stirling. It was on the eve of the day, which, he had promised Earl de Warenne, should see the English prisoners depart for the borders. No doubt of his arriving at the appointed time was entertained by the Scots, or by the Southrons in the

* *Deeds shaw* is one of the honourable mottoes worn by the present head of the noble house of Ruthven.

castle ; the one knew the sacredness of his word ; and the other, having felt his prowess, would not so far disparage their own, as to suppose that any could withstand him, by whom they were beaten.

De Warenne, as he stood on the battlements of the keep, beheld, from afar, the long line of Scottish soldiers as they descended the Ochil hills. When he pointed it out to De Valence, that nobleman, (who, in proportion as he wished to check the arms of Wallace had flattered himself that it might happen,) against the evidence of his eyesight, contradicted the observation of the veteran earl.

“ Your sight deceives you,” said he, “ it is only the sunbeams playing on the cliffs.”

“ Then those cliffs are moving ones,” cried De Warenne, “ which, I fear, have ground our countrymen on the coast to powder ! We shall find Wallace here before sunset ; to us how he has resented the affront our ill-advised prince cast on his jealous honour.”

“ His honour,” returned De Valence, “ is like that of his countrymen’s ; an enemy alike to his own happiness, and to that of others. Had it allowed him to accept the crown of Scotland, and so have fought Edward with the concentrating arm of a king ; or would he even now, offer peace to our sovereign, granting his prerogative as liege lord of the country, all might go well ; but as the honour, you speak of, prevents his using these means of ending the contest, destruction must be the end of his career.”

“ And what quarrel,” demanded De Warenne, “ can you, my Lord de Valence, have against this nice honour of Sir William Wallace, since you allow it secures the final success of our cause ?”

“ His honour, and himself, are hateful to me !” impatiently answered De Valence ; “ he crosses me in my wishes, public and private ; and for the sake of my king and myself, I might almost be tempted —” He turned pale as he spoke, and met the penetrating glance of De Warenne. He paused.

“ Tempted to what ?” asked Warenne.

“ To a Brutus mode of ridding the state of an enemy.”

“ That might be noble in a Roman citizen,” returned

De Warenne, "which would be villanous in an English lord; treated as you have been by a generous victor, not the usurper of any country's liberties, but rather a Brutus in defence of his own. Which man of us all, from the general to the meanest follower in our camps, has he injured?"

Lord Aymer frowned: "Did he not expose me, threaten me with an ignominious death, on the walls of Stirling?"

"But was it before he saw the Earl of Mar, with his hapless family, brought, with halters on their necks, to be suspended from this very tower? — Ah! what a tale has the lovely Countess told me of that direful scene! What he then did, was to check the sanguinary Cressingham from embruing his hands in the blood of female and infant innocence?"

"I care not," cried De Valence, "what are, or are not the offences of this domineering Wallace, but I hate him; and my respect for his advocates cannot but correspond with that feeling." As he spoke, that he might not be further molested by the arguments of De Warenne, he abruptly turned away, and left the battlements.

Pride would not allow the enraged earl to confess his private reasons for this vehement enmity against the Scottish chief. A conference which he had held the preceding evening with Lord Mar, was the cause of this augmented hatred; and, from that moment, the haughty Southron vowed the destruction of Wallace, by open attack, or secret treachery. Ambition, and the base counterfeit of love, those two master passions in untempered minds, were the springs of this antipathy. The instant in which he knew that the young creature, whom, at a distance, he discerned clinging around the Earl of Mar's neck in the streets of Stirling, was the same Lady Helen, on whose account Lord Soulis had poured on him such undeserved invectives in Bothwell Castle; curious to have a nearer view of one, whose transcendent beauty he had often heard celebrated by others, he ordered her to be immediately conveyed to his apartments in the citadel.

On their first interview, he was more struck by her personal charms, than he had ever been with any woman's,

although few were so noted for gallantry in the English court as himself. He could hardly understand the nature of his feelings while discoursing with her. To all others of her sex, he had declared his enamoured wishes, with as much ease as vivacity ; but when he looked on Helen, the admiration her loveliness inspired, was checked by an undescribable awe. No word of passion escaped his lips ; he sought to win her, by a deportment consonant with her own dignity of manners ; and obeyed all her wishes, excepting when they pointed to any communication with her parents. He feared the wary eyes of the Earl of Mar. But nothing of this reverence of Helen, was grounded on any principle within the heart of De Valence. His idea of virtue was so erroneous, that he believed, by the short assumption of its semblance, he might so steal on the confidence of his victim, as to induce her to forget all the world ; nay, heaven itself, in his sophistry and blandishments. To facilitate this end, he at first designed to precipitate the condemnation of the Earl, that he might be rid of a father's existence holding, in dread of his censure, the perhaps otherwise yielding heart of his lovely mistress.

The unprincipled and impure can have no idea, that virtue or delicacy are other than vestments of disguise, or of ornament, to be thrown off at will ; and therefore, to reason with such minds, is to talk to the winds — to tell a man who is born blind, to decide between two colours. In short, a libertine heart is the same in all ages of the world. De Valence, therefore, seeing the anguish of her fears for her father, and hearing the fervour with which she implored for his life, adopted the plan of granting the Earl reprieves from day to day ; and in spite of the remonstrances of Cressingham, he intended (after having worked upon the terrors of Helen) to grant to her her father's release, on condition of her yielding herself to be his. He had even meditated, that the accomplishment of this device should have taken place the very night in which Wallace's first appearance before Stirling had called its garrison to arms.

Impelled by vengeance against the man who had driven him from Dumbarton and from Ayr, and irritated at being

delayed, in the moment when his passion was to seize its object, De Valence thought to end all by a *coup de main*,—and rushing out of the gates, was taken prisoner. Such was the situation of things, when Wallace first became master of the place.

Now when the whole of the English army were in the same captivity with himself, when he saw the lately proscribed Lord Mar, governor of Stirling, and that the Scottish cause seemed triumphant on every side, De Valence changed his former illicit views on Helen, and bethought him of making her his wife. Ambition, as well as love, impelled him to this resolution; for he aspired to the dignity of Lord Warden of Scotland; and, he foresaw, that the vast influence which his marriage with the daughter of Mar must give him in the country, would be a decisive argument with the King of England.

To this purpose, not doubting the Scottish Earl's acceptance of such a son-in-law, on the very day that Wallace marched towards the coast, De Valence sent to request an hour's private audience of Lord Mar. He could not then grant it; but at noon, next day, they met in the governor's apartments.

The Southron, without much preface, opened his wishes, and proffered his hand for the Lady Helen; "I will make her the proudest lady in Great Britain," continued he; "for she shall have a court in my Welsh province, little inferior to that of Edward's queen."

"Pomp would have no sway with my daughter," replied the Earl; "it is the princely mind she values, not its pageantry. Whomsoever she prefers, the tribute will be paid to the merit of the object, not to his rank; and therefore, Earl, should it be you, the greater will be your pledge of happiness. I shall repeat to her what you have said; and, to-morrow, deliver her answer."

Not deeming it possible that it should be otherwise than favourable, De Valence allowed his imagination to roam over every anticipated delight. He exulted in the pride, with which he would show this perfection of northern beauty, to the fair of England: how would the simple graces of her seraphic form, which looked more like a

being of air than of earth, put to shame the laboured beauties of the court! And then it was not only the artless charms of a wood-nymph, he should present to the wondering throng, but a being, whose majesty of soul proclaimed her high descent, and peerless virtues. How did he congratulate himself, in contemplating this unsullied temple of virgin innocence, that he had never, by even the vapour of one impassioned sigh, contaminated her pure ear; or broken the magic spell, which seemed fated to crown him with happiness unknown, with honour unexampled! To be so blessed, so distinguished, so envied, was to him a dream of triumph, that wafted away all remembrance of his late defeat; and, he believed, in taking Helen from Scotland, he should bear away a richer prize, than any he could leave behind.

Full of these anticipations, he attended the governor of Stirling the next day, to hear his daughter's answer. But unwilling to give the Earl that advantage over him, which a knowledge of his views in the marriage might occasion, he affected a composure he did not feel; and with a lofty air entered the room, as if he were come rather to confer than to beg a favour. This deportment did not lessen the satisfaction with which the brave Scot opened his mission.

“My Lord, I have just seen my daughter. She duly appreciates the honour you would confer on her; she is grateful for all your courtesies, whilst she was your prisoner; but beyond that sentiment, her heart, attached to her native land, cannot sympathise with your wishes.”

De Valence started. He did not expect any thing in the shape of a denial; but supposing, that perhaps a little of his own art was tried by the father, to enhance the value of his daughter's yielding, he threw himself into a chair, and affecting chagrin at a disappointment (which he did not believe was seriously intended), exclaimed with vehemence, “Surely, Lord Mar, this is not meant as a refusal? I cannot receive it as such, for I know Lady Helen's gentleness; I know the sweet tenderness of her nature would plead for me, were she to see me at her feet, and hear me pour forth the most ardent passion that ever burnt in a human breast. Oh, my gracious Lord, if

it be her attachment to Scotland which alone militates against me, I will promise that her time shall be passed between the two countries. Her marriage with me, may facilitate that peace with England, which must be the wish of us all; and perhaps the Lord Wardenship, which De Warenne now holds, may be transferred to me. I have reasons for expecting that it will be so; and then, she, as a queen in Scotland, and you as her father, may claim every distinction from her fond husband, every indulgence for the Scots, which your patriot heart can dictate. This would be a certain benefit to Scotland; while the *ignis fatuus* you are now following, however brilliant may be its career during Edward's absence, must, on his return, be extinguished in disaster, and infamy."

The silence of the Earl of Mar, who, willing to hear all that was in the mind of De Valence, had let him proceed uninterrupted, encouraged the Southron lord to say more than he had at first intended to reveal; but when he made a pause, and seemed to expect an answer, the Earl spoke: —

"I am fully sensible of the honour you would bestow upon my daughter, and myself, by your alliance; but, as I have said before, her heart is too devoted to Scotland, to marry any man whose birth does not make it his duty, to prefer the liberty of her native land, even before his love for her. That hope, to see our country freed from a yoke unjustly laid upon her; that hope, which you, not considering our rights, or weighing the power that lies in a just cause, denominate an *ignis fatuus*, is the only passion, I believe, that lives in the gentle bosom of my Helen; and therefore, noble Earl, not even your offers, can equal the measure of her wishes."

At this speech, De Valence bit his lip with real disappointment; and starting from his chair, now in unaffected disorder; "I am not to be deceived, Lord Mar," cried he; "I am not to be cajoled, by the pretended patriotism of your daughter; I know the sex too well, to be cheated with these excuses. The *ignis fatuus*, that leads your daughter from my arms, is not the freedom of Scotland, but the handsome rebel who conquers in its

name! He is now fortune's minion: but he will fall, Lord Mar; and, then, what will be the fate of his mad adherents?"

"Earl de Valence," replied the veteran, "sixty winters have checked the tides of passion in my veins; but the indignation of my soul, against any insult offered to my daughter's delicacy, or to the name of the Lord Regent of Scotland, is not less powerful in my breast! You are my prisoner; and I pardon, what I could so easily avenge. I will even answer you; and say, that I do not know of any exclusive affection subsisting between my daughter, and Sir William Wallace; but this I am assured of, that were it the case, she would be more ennobled in being the wife of so true a patriot, and so virtuous a man, than were she advanced to the bosom of an emperor. And for myself, were he, to-morrow, hurled by a mysterious Providence from his present nobly-won elevation, I should glory in my son, were he such; and, would think him as great on a scaffold, as on a throne."

"It is well that is your opinion," replied De Valence, stopping in his wrathful strides, and turning on Mar with vengeful irony; "cherish these heroics, for you will assuredly see him so exalted. Then, where will be his triumphs over Edward's arms, and Pembroke's* heart? — Where your daughter's patriot husband; your glorious son? — Start not, old man, — for by all the powers of hell, I swear, that some eyes which now look proudly on the Southron host, shall close in blood!"

"If they do," replied Mar, shuddering at the demoniac fire that lightened from the countenance of De Valence, "it must be by the agency of devils; and their minister, vindictive earl, will meet the vengeance of the eternal arm!"

"These dreams," cried De Valence, "cannot terrify me. You are neither a seer, nor I a fool, to be taken by such prophecies. But were you wise enough to embrace the advantage I offer, you might be a prophet of good, greater than he of Ercildoun, to your nation! for all that you would promise, I would take care should be fulfilled.

* Lord Aymer de Valence was Earl of Pembroke; but being first known in Scotland by his family name, in that kingdom he was never called by any other.

But you cast from you your peace and safety ; my vengeance shall therefore take its course. I rely not on the oracles of heaven, nor hell ; but what I devote, shall be condemned. I have pronounced the doom of my enemies : and though you now see me a prisoner, — tremble, haughty Scot, at the resentment which lies in this head and heart ! This arm, needs not the armies of Edward, to pierce you in your boast !”

He left the room as he spoke ; and Lord Mar, shaking his venerable head as he disappeared, said to himself— “ Impotent rage of passion, and of youth, I pity and forgive you !”

It was not, therefore, so extraordinary, that De Valence, when he saw Wallace descending the Oichel hills, with the flying banners of new victories, should break into curses of his fortune, and swear, inwardly, the most determined revenge.

Fuel was added to this fire, at sunset, when the almost measureless defiles of prisoners, marshalled before the ramparts of Stirling, and taking the usual oath to Wallace, met his view.

“ To-morrow, we quit these dishonouring walls,” cried he to himself ; “ but ere I leave them, if there be power in gold, or strength in my arm, he shall die !”

CHAPTER XLI.

THE STATE PRISON.

THE Regent's re-entrance into the citadel of Stirling, being on the evening preceding the day he had promised should see the English lords depart for their country ; De Warrenne, as a mark of respect to a man whom he could not but regard with admiration, went to the barbican-gate to bid him welcome.

Wallace appeared ; and as the cavalcade of noble Southrons, who had lately commanded beyond the Tay, followed him, Murray glanced his eye around, and said with a smile to De Warrenne, “ You see, Sir Earl, how we Scots keep

our word!" and then he added, "You leave Stirling tomorrow; but these remain, till Lord Douglas opens their prison-doors."

"I cannot but acquiesce in the justice of your commander's determination," returned De Warenne; "and to comfort these gentlemen under their captivity, I can only tell them, that if any thing can reconcile them to the loss of liberty, it is, being the prisoners of Sir William Wallace."

After having transferred his captives to the charge of Lord Mar, Wallace went alone to the chamber of Montgomery; to see whether the state of his wounds would allow him to march on the morrow. — While he was yet there, an invitation arrived from the Countess of Mar, requesting his presence at an entertainment which, by her husband's consent, she meant to give that night at Snawdown, to the Southron lords before their departure for England.

"I fear you dare not expend your strength on this party?" enquired Wallace, turning to Montgomery.

"Certainly not," returned he; "but I shall see you amidst your noble friends, at some future period. When the peace, your arms must win, is established between the two nations, I shall then revisit Scotland; and openly declare my friendship for Sir William Wallace."

"As these are your sentiments," replied Wallace, "I shall hope, that you will unite your influence, with that of the brave Earl of Gloucester, to persuade your King to stop this bloodshed; for it is no vain boast to declare, that he may bury Scotland beneath her slaughtered sons, but they never will again consent to acknowledge any right in an usurper."

"Sanguinary have been the instruments of my sovereign's rule in Scotland," replied Montgomery; "but such cruelty is foreign from his gallant heart; and without offending that high-souled patriotism, which would make me revere its possessor, were he the lowliest man in your legions; allow me, noblest of Scots, to plead one word in vindication of him, to whom my allegiance is pledged. Had he come hither, conducted by war alone, what would Edward have been worse than any other conqueror? But on the reverse, was not his right to the supremacy of Scot-

land acknowledged by the princes who contended for the crown? and besides, did not all the great lords swear fealty to England, on the day he nominated their king?"

"Had you not been under these impressions, brave Montgomery, I believe I never should have seen you in arms against Scotland; but I will remove them by a simple answer. All the princes whom you speak of, excepting Bruce of Annandale, did assent to the newly-offered claim of Edward on Scotland; but who, amongst them, had any probable chance for the throne, but Bruce, and Baliol? Such ready acquiescence, was meant to create them one. Bruce, conscious of his inherent rights, rejected the iniquitous demand of Edward; Baliol accorded with it, and was made a king. All who were base enough to worship the rising sun, and I may say, condemn the God of Truth, swore to the falsehood. Others remained gloomily silent; and the bravest of them retired to the Highlands; where they dwelt amongst their mountains, till the cries of Scotland called them again to fight her battles.

"Thus did Edward establish himself, as the liege lord of this kingdom; and whether the oppressions which followed were his or his agent's immediate acts, it matters not, for he made them his own by his after-conduct. When remonstrances were sent to London, he neither punished nor reprimanded the delinquents, but marched an armed force into our country, to compel us to be trampled on. It was not an Alexander, nor a Charlemagne, coming in his strength, to subdue ancient enemies; or to aggrandize his name, by vanquishing nations far remote, with whom he could have no particular affinity! Terrible as such ambition was, it is innocence to what Edward has done. He came, in the first instance, to Scotland as a friend: the nation committed its dearest interests to his virtue; they put their hands into his, and he bound them in shackles. Was this honour? Was this the right of conquest? The cheek of Alexander would have blushed deep as his Tyrian robe; and the face of Charlemagne turned pale as his lilies, at the bare suspicion of being capable of such a deed.

"No, Lord Montgomery, it is not our conqueror we are opposing; it is a traitor, who, under the mask of friend-

ship, has attempted to usurp our rights, destroy our liberties, and make a desert of our once happy country. This is the true statement of the case: and though I wish not to make a subject outrage his sovereign, yet truth demands of you to say to Edward, that to withdraw his pretensions from this exhausted country, is the restitution we may justly claim—is all that we wish. Let him leave us in peace, and we shall no longer make war upon him. But if he persist (which the ambassadors from the Prince of Wales denounce), even as Samson drew the temple on himself, to destroy his enemies, Scotland will discharge itself upon the valleys of England; and there compel them to share the fate in which we may be doomed to perish.”

“ I will think of this discourse,” returned Montgomery, “ when I am far distant; and rely on it, noble Wallace, that I will assert the privilege of my birth, and counsel my king as becomes an honest man.”

“ Highly would he estimate such counsel,” cried Wallace, “ had he virtue to feel, that he who will not be unjust to his sovereign’s enemies, must be of an honour, that will bind him with double fidelity to his King. Such proof give your sovereign; and, if he have one spark of that greatness of mind which you say he possesses, though he may not adopt your advice, he must respect the adviser.”

As Wallace pressed the hand of his new friend, to leave him to repose, a messenger entered from Lord Mar, to request the Regent’s presence in his closet. He found him with Lord de Warrene.

The latter presented him with another despatch from the Prince of Wales. It was to say that news had reached him of Wallace’s design to attack the castles garrisoned by England on the eastern coast. Should this information prove true, he (the Prince) declared, that as a punishment for such increasing audacity, he would put Lord Douglas into closer confinement; and while the Southron fleets should baffle all Wallace’s attempts, the moment the exchange of prisoners was completed on the borders, an army from England should enter Scotland, and ravage it with fire and sword.

When Wallace had heard this despatch, he smiled and said, "The deed is done, my Lord de Warenne. Both the castles and the fleets are taken; and what punishment must we now expect from this terrible threatener?"

"Little from him, or his headlong counsellors," replied De Warenne; "but Thomas Earl of Lancaster, the King's nephew, is come from abroad with a numerous army. He is to conduct the Scottish prisoners to the borders; and then to fall upon Scotland with all his strength; unless you previously surrender, not only Berwick but Stirling, and the whole of the district between the Forth and the Tweed, into his hands."

"My Lord de Warenne," replied Wallace, "you can expect but one return to these absurd demands. I shall accompany you myself to the Scottish borders, and there make my reply."

De Warenne, who did indeed look for this answer, replied, "I anticipated that such would be your determination; and I have to regret, that the wild counsels which surround my prince precipitate him into conduct which must draw much blood on both sides, before his royal father's presence can regain what he has lost."

"Ah, my Lord," replied Wallace, "is it to be nothing but war? Have you now a strong-hold of any force in all the Highlands? is not the greater part of the Lowlands free? and before this day month, not a rood of land in Scotland is likely to hold a Southron soldier. We conquer, but it is for our own. Why then this un-receding determination to invade us? Not a blade of grass would I disturb on the other side of Cheviot, if we might have peace. Let Edward yield us that, and though he has pierced us with many a wound, we will yet forgive him."

De Warenne shook his head: "I know my King too well, to expect pacific measures. He may die with the sword in his hand; but he will never grant an hour's repose to this country, till it submits to his sceptre."

"Then," replied Wallace, "the sword must be the portion of him and his! — Ruthless tyrant! If the blood of

Abel called for vengeance on his murderer, what must be the phials of wrath which are reserved for thee?"

A flush overspread the face of De Warenne at this apostrophe; and forcing a smile, "This strict notion of right," said he, "is very well in declamation; but how would it crop the wings of conquerors, and shorten the warrior's arm, did they measure by this rule?"

"How would it, indeed!" replied Wallace; "and that they should, is most devoutly to be wished. All warfare that is not defensive, is criminal; and he who draws his sword to oppress, or merely to aggrandize, is a murderer and a robber. This is the plain truth, Lord de Warenne."

"I have never considered it in that light," returned the Earl, "nor shall I turn philosopher now. I revere your principle, Sir William Wallace; but it is too sublime to be mine. Nay, nor would it be politic, for one who holds his possessions in England by the right of conquest, to question the virtue of the deed. By the sword my ancestors gained their estates; and with the sword I have no objection to extend my territories."

Wallace now saw that De Warenne, though a man of honour, was not one of virtue. Though his amiable nature made him gracious in the midst of hostility, and his good dispositions would not allow him to act disgracefully in any concern, yet, duty to God, seemed a poet's flight to him. Educated in the forms of religion, without knowing its spirit, he despised them; and believing the Deity too wise to be affected by the mummeries of the Romish ritual, his ignorance of the sublime benevolence, which disdains not to provide food even for the "sparrow ere it falls," made him think the Creator of all too great to care about the actions of men: hence, being without the principles of good, virtue as virtue was nonsense to him.

Wallace did not answer his remark, and the conference was soon closed.

CHAPTER XLII.

CHAPEL IN SNAWDOUN.

THOUGH burning with stifled passions, Earl de Valence accepted the invitation of Lady Mar. He hoped to see Helen ; to gain her ear for a few minutes ; and above all, to find some opportunity, during the entertainment, of taking his meditated revenge on Wallace. The dagger seemed the surest way ; and, could he render the blow effectual, he should not only destroy the rival of his wishes, but, by ridding his monarch of a powerful foe, deserve every honour at the royal hands. Love and ambition again swelled his breast ; and with recovered spirits, and a glow on his countenance, which re-awakened hope had planted there, he accompanied De Warrenne to the palace.

The hall for the feast was arrayed with feudal grandeur. The seats at the table, spread for the knights of both countries, were covered with highly-wrought stuffs ; while the emblazoned banners, and other armorial trophies of the nobles, being hung aloft according to the degree of the owner, each knight saw his precedence and where to take his place. The most costly meats, with the royally attired peacock, served up in silver and gold dishes ; and wine of the rarest quality sparkled on the board. During the repast, two choice minstrels were seated in the gallery above, to sing the friendship of King Alfred of England, with Gregory the Great of Caledonia. The squires, and other military attendants of the nobles present, were placed at tables in the lower part of the hall, and served with courteous hospitality.

Resentful, alike at his captivity, and thwarted passion, De Valence had hitherto refused to show himself beyond the ramparts of the citadel ; he was therefore surprised, on entering the hall of Snawdoun with De Warrenne, to see such regal pomp ; and at the command of the woman, who had so lately been his prisoner at Dumbarton ; and whom (because she resembled an English lady who had rejected him) he had treated with the most rigorous contempt.

Forgetting these indignities, in the pride of displaying her present consequence, Lady Mar came forward to receive her illustrious guests. Her dress corresponded with the magnificence of the banquet ; a robe of cloth of Baudkins, enriched, while it displayed the beauties of her person ; her wimple blazed with jewels, and a superb carkanet emitted its various rays from her bosom.*

De Warenne followed her with his eyes, as she moved from him. With an unconscious sigh, he whispered De Valence, " What a land is this, where all the women are fair, and the men are brave ! "

" I wish that it, and all its men, and women, were in perdition ! " returned De Valence in a surly tone. Lady Ruthven, entering with the wives and daughters of the neighbouring chieftains, checked the further expression of his spleen ; and his eyes sought amongst them, but sought in vain, for Helen.

The chieftains of the Scottish army, with the lords Buchan and March, were assembled around the Countess, at the moment a shout from the populace without announced the arrival of the Regent. His noble figure was now disencumbered of armour ; and with no more sumptuous guard, than the simple plaid of his country, he appeared effulgent in manly beauty, and the glory of his recent deeds. De Valence frowned heavily, as he looked on him ; and thanked his fortunate stars, that Helen was absent, from sharing the admiration which seemed to animate every breast. The eyes of Lady Mar, at once told the impassioned De Valence, too well read in the like expressions, what were her sentiments towards the young Regent ; and the blushes, and eager civilities of the ladies around, displayed how much they were struck with the now fully discerned and unequalled graces of his person. Lady Mar forgot all in him. And indeed so much did he seem

* *Cloth of Baudkins* was one of the richest stuffs worn in the thirteenth century. It is said to have been composed of silk interwoven with gold. According to *Du Cange*, it derived its name from *Baldack*, the modern appellation for *Babylon*, or rather *Bagdat*, where it was first manufactured. *Wimple* was a head-dress of the times ; it resembled a veil, not worn flowing, but in curious folds upon the head. The *carcanet* was a large broad necklace of precious stones of all colours, set in various shapes, and fastened by gold links to each other.

the idol of every heart, that from the two venerable lords of Loch-awe and Bothwell, to the youngest man in company, all ears hung on his words, all eyes upon his countenance.

The entertainment was conducted with every regard to that chivalric courtesy, which a noble conqueror always pays to the vanquished. Indeed, from the wit and pleasantry which passed from the opposite side of the tables, and in which the ever gay Murray was the leader, it rather appeared a convivial meeting of friends, than an assemblage of mortal foes. During the banquet, the bards sung legends of the Scottish worthies, who had brought honour to their nation in days of old; and as the board was cleared, they struck at once into a full chorus. Wallace caught the sound of his own name, accompanied with epithets of extravagant praise; he rose hastily from his chair, and with his hand motioned them to cease. They obeyed; but Lady Mar remonstrating with him, he gaily said, it was an ill omen to sing a warrior's actions till he were incapable of performing more; and therefore he begged she would excuse him from hearkening to his.

"Then let us change their strains to a dance," replied the Countess.

"A hall! a hall!" exclaimed Murray, springing from his seat, delighted with the proposal.

"I have no objection," answered Wallace: and putting the hand she presented to him, into that of Lord de Warenne; he added, "I am not of a sufficiently gay temperament to grace the change; but this Earl may not have the same reason for declining so fair a challenge!"

Lady Mar coloured with mortification; for she had thought, that Wallace would not venture to refuse, before so many; but following the impulse of De Warenne's arm, she proceeded to the other end of the hall; where, by Murray's quick arrangement, the younger lords of both countries had already singled out ladies, and were marshalled for the dance.

As the hours moved on, the spirits of Wallace subsided from their usual tone, into a sadness which he thought

might be noticed ; and wishing to escape such observation, (for he could not explain to those gay ones, why scenes like these ever made him sorrowful,) and whispering to Mar, that he would go for an hour to visit Montgomery, he withdrew, unnoticed by all but his watchful enemy.

De Valence, who hovered about his steps, had heard him enquire of Lady Ruthven, why Helen was not present. He was within hearing of this whisper also, and, with a Satanic joy, the dagger shook in his hand. He knew that Wallace had many a solitary place to pass, between Snawdoun and the citadel ; and the company being too pleasantly absorbed, to mark who entered or disappeared, he took an opportunity, and stole out after him.

But, for once, the impetuous fury of hatred, met a temporary disappointment. While De Valence was cowering, like a thief, under the eaves of the houses, and prowling along the lonely paths, to the citadel ; while he started at every noise, as if it came to apprehend him for his meditated deed ; or rushed forward at the sight of any solitary passenger, whom his eager vengeance almost mistook for Wallace ; Wallace, himself, had taken a different track.

As he walked through the illuminated archways, which led from the hall, he perceived a darkened passage. Hoping, by that avenue, to quit the palace unobserved, he immediately struck into it ; for he was aware, that should he go the usual way, the crowd at the gate would recognise him, and he could not escape their acclamations. He followed the passage for a considerable time, and at last was stopped by a door. It yielded to his hand, and he found himself at the entrance of a large building. He advanced ; and passing a high screen of carved oak ; by a dim light, which gleamed from waxen tapers on the altar, he perceived it to be the chapel.

“ A happy transition,” said he to himself, “ from the jubilant scene I have now left ; from the grievous scenes I have lately shared !— Here, gracious God,” thought he, “ may I, unseen by any other eye, pour out my whole soul to thee. And here, before thy footstool, will I declare my thanksgiving for thy mercies ; and, with my tears, wash from my soul the blood I have been compelled to shed !”

While advancing towards the altar, he was startled by a voice, proceeding from the quarter whither he was going, and with low and gently-breathed fervour, uttering these words: — “Defend him, Heavenly Father! Defend him, day and night, from the devices of this wicked man: and, above all, during these hours of revelry and confidence, guard his unshielded breast from treachery and death.” The voice faltered, and added with greater agitation, “Ah, unhappy me, that I should be the cause of danger to the hope of Scotland; that I should pluck peril on the head of William Wallace!” A figure, which had been hidden by the rails of the altar, with these words rose suddenly, and stretching forth her clasped hands, exclaimed aloud, “But thou, who knowest I had no blame in this, wilt not afflict me by his danger! Thou wilt deliver him, O God, out of the hand of this cruel foe!”

Wallace was not more astonished at hearing, that some one, in whom he reposed, was his secret enemy; than at seeing Lady Helen in that place, at that hour, and addressing Heaven for him. There was something so celestial in the maid, as she stood in her white robes, true emblems of her own innocence, before the footstool of God; that, although her prayers were delivered with a pathos, which told they sprang from a heart more than commonly interested in their object; yet every word and look breathed so eloquently, the virgin purity of her soul, the hallowed purpose of her petitions; that Wallace, drawn by the sympathy, with which kindred virtues ever attract spirit to spirit, did not hesitate to discover himself. He stepped from the shadow, which involved him. The pale light of the tapers shone upon his advancing figure. Helen’s eyes fell upon him, as she turned round. She was transfixed, and silent. He moved forward. “Lady Helen,” said he, in a respectful, and even tender voice. At the sound, a fearful rushing of shame, seemed to overwhelm her faculties; for she knew not how long he might have been in the church, and that he had not heard her beseech Heaven, to make him less the object of her thoughts. She sunk on her knees beside the altar, and covered her face with her hands.

The action, the confusion, might have betrayed her secret to Wallace. But he only thought of her pious invocations for his safety; he only remembered, that it was she who had given a holy grave to the only woman he could ever love: and, full of gratitude, as a pilgrim would approach a saint, he drew near to her. "Holiest of earthly maids," said he, kneeling down beside her; "in this lonely hour, in the sacred presence of Almighty Purity, receive my soul's thanks for the prayers I have this moment heard you breathe for me! They are more precious to me, Lady Helen, than the generous plaudits of my country; they are a greater reward to me, than would have been the crown, with which Scotland sought to endow me; for, do they not give me, what all the world cannot,—the protection of Heaven!"

"I would pray for it!" softly answered Helen, but not venturing to look up.

"The prayer of meek goodness, we know, 'availeth much.' Continue, then, to offer up that incense for me," added he, "and I shall march forth to-morrow, with redoubled strength; for I shall think, holy maid, that I have yet a Marion to pray for me on earth, as well as one in heaven!"

Lady Helen's heart beat, at these words; but it was with no unhallowed emotion. She withdrew her hands from her face, and clasping them, looked up:—"Marion will indeed echo all my prayers; and he who reads my heart, will, I trust, grant them! They are for your life, Sir William Wallace," added she, turning to him with agitation, "for it is menaced."

"I will enquire by whom," answered he, "when I have first paid my duty at this altar, for guarding it so long. And dare I, daughter of goodness, to ask you, to unite the voice of your gentle spirit, with the secret one of mine? I would beseech Heaven, for pardon on my own transgressions; I would ask of its mercy, to establish the liberty of Scotland. Pray with me, Lady Helen; and the invocations our souls utter, will meet the promise of him, who said, 'Where two or three are joined together in prayer, there am I in the midst of them.'"

Helen looked on him with a holy smile; and pressing

the crucifix, which she held, to her lips, bowed her head on it in mute assent. Wallace threw himself prostrate on the steps of the altar; and the fervour of his sighs alone, breathed to his companion the deep devotion of his soul. How the time past, he knew not; so was he absorbed, in the communion which his spirit held in heaven, with the most gracious of beings. But the bell of the palace striking the matin hour, reminded him that he was yet on earth; and looking up, his eyes met those of Helen. His devotional cross hung on his arm: he kissed it:—“Wear this, holy maid,” said he, “in remembrance of this hour!” She bowed her fair neck, and he put the consecrated chain over it: “Let it bear witness to a friendship,” added he, clasping her hands in his, “which will be cemented by eternal ties in heaven.”

Helen bent her face upon his hands: he felt the sacred tears of so pure a compact, upon them; and while he looked up, as if he thought the spirit of his Marion hovered near, to bless a communion, so remote from all infringement of the sentiment he had dedicated for ever to her, Helen raised her head—and, with a terrible shriek, throwing her arms around the body of Wallace, he, that moment, felt an assassin’s steel in his back, and she fell senseless on his breast. He started on his feet; a dagger fell from his wound to the ground, but the hand which had struck the blow, he could nowhere see. To search further, was then impossible, for Helen lay on his bosom like one dead. Not doubting that she had seen his assailant, and fainted from alarm, he was laying her on the steps of the altar, that he might bring some water from the basin of the chapel to recover her, when he saw that her arm was not only stained with his blood, but streaming with her own. The dagger had gashed it in reaching him.

“Execrable villain!” cried he, turning cold at the sight; and instantly comprehending, that it was to defend him, she had thrown her arms around him, he exclaimed in a voice of agony, “Are two of the most matchless women, the earth ever saw, to die for me!” Trembling with alarm, and with renewed grief; for the terrible scene of Ellerslie was now brought in all its horrors before him; he tore off her veil, to stanch the blood; but the cut was too wide

for his surgery : and losing every other consideration, in fears for her life, he again took her in his arms, and bore her out of the chapel. He hastened through the dark passage, and almost flying along the lighted galleries, entered the hall. The noisy fright of the servants, as he broke through their ranks at the door, alarmed the revelers ; and turning round, what was their astonishment, to behold the Regent, pale and bloody, bearing in his arms a lady apparently lifeless, and covered with the same dreadful hue !

Mar instantly recognised his daughter ; and rushed towards her, with a cry of horror. Wallace sunk, with his breathless load, upon the nearest bench ; and, while her head rested on his bosom, ordered assistance to be brought. Lady Mar gazed on the spectacle, with a benumbed dismay. None present durst ask a question, till a priest drawing near, unbound the arm of Helen, and discovered its deep wound.

“ Who has done this ? ” cried Mar turning to Wallace, with all the anguish of a father in his countenance.

“ I know not,” replied he ; “ but, I believe, some villain who aimed at my life.”

“ Where is Lord de Valence ? ” exclaimed Mar, suddenly recollecting his menaces against Wallace,

“ I am here,” replied he in a composed voice : “ would you have me seek the assassin ? ”

“ No, no,” cried the Earl, ashamed of his suspicion ; “ but here has been some foul work, — and my daughter is slain.”

“ Oh, not so ! ” cried Murray, who, at her first appearance, had hurried towards her, and knelt at her side : “ she will not die — so much excellence cannot die.” A stifled groan from Wallace, accompanied by a look, told Murray, that he had known the death of similar excellence. With this unanswerable appeal, the young chieftain dropped his head on the other hand of Helen ; and, could any one have seen his face, buried as it was in her robes, they would have beheld tears of agony drawn from that ever-gay heart.

The wound was closed, and Helen sighed convulsively. At this intimation of recovery, the priest made all, except-

ing those who supported her, stand back. But, as Lady Mar lingered near Wallace, she saw the paleness of his countenance turn to a deadly hue, and, his eyes closing, he sunk back on the bench. Her shrieks now resounded through the hall ; and falling into hysterics, she was taken into the gallery, while the more collected Lady Ruthven remained, to attend the victims before her.

At the instant Wallace fell, De Valence, losing all self-command, caught hold of De Warenne's arm, and whispering, " I thought it was sure ; — Long live King Edward ! " rushed out of the hall. These words revealed to De Warenne who was the assassin ; and though struck to the soul, with the turpitude of the deed, he thought the honour of England would not allow him to accuse the perpetrator ; and he remained silent.

The inanimate body of Wallace was now drawn from under that of Helen : and, in the act, another priest who had arrived, discovered the tapestry-seat clotted with blood, and the Regent's back, bathed in the same vital stream. Having found his wound, the priests laid him on the ground ; and were administering their balsams, when Helen opened her eyes. Her mind was too strongly possessed with the horror which had entered it, before she became insensible, to lose the consciousness of her fears ; and immediately looking around her with an aghast countenance, her sight met the out-stretched body of Wallace. — " Oh ! is it so ? " cried she, throwing herself into the bosom of her father. He understood what she meant : — " He lives, my child ! but he is wounded like yourself. Have courage ; revive for his sake and for mine ! "

" Helen ! Helen ! dear Helen ! " cried Murray, clinging to her hand, " while you live, what that loves you can die ! "

While these acclamations surrounded her couch, Edwin, in speechless apprehension, supported the insensible head of Wallace ; and De Warenne, inwardly execrating the perfidy of De Valence, knelt down to assist the priests in their office.

A few minutes longer, and the stanch'd blood refluxing to the chieftain's heart, he too opened his eyes ; and in-

stantly starting on his arm — “What has happened to me?” demanded he; “where is Lady Helen?”

At his voice, which aroused Helen; who, believing that he was indeed dead, was relapsing into her former state, she could only press her father's hand to her lips; as if he had given the life she so valued, and bursting into a shower of relieving tears, breathed out her rapturous thanks to God. Her low murmurs reached the ears of Wallace; and looking round to Edwin, whose colourless cheek told the depth of his fears; “We both live,” said he: “your cousin speaks; and it restores me, to hear her voice. Let me declare my gratitude to her too, who would have died for me!”

The dimness having left his eyes; and the blood, (the extreme loss of which, from his great agitations, had alone caused him to swoon,) being stopped by an embalmed bandage, he felt no further impediment from his wound; and rising, hastened to the side of Helen. Lord Mar softly whispered his daughter, — “Sir William Wallace is at your feet, my dearest child; look on him, and tell him that you live.”

“I am well, my father,” returned she, in a faltering voice; “and, may it indeed please the Almighty, to preserve him!”

“I am alive, and well,” answered Wallace: “but thanks to God, and to you, blessed lady, that I am so! Had not that lovely arm received the greater part of the dagger, it must have reached my heart.”

An exclamation of horror, at what might have been, burst from the lips of Edwin. Helen could have re-echoed it; but she now held her feelings under too severe a rein, to allow them so to speak.

“Thanks to the Protector of the just,” cried she, “for your preservation! when I raised my eyes, I saw the assassin with his gown so held before his face, that I could not discern who he was; but the dagger was aimed at the back of Sir William Wallace! How I caught it, I cannot tell, for I seemed to die on the instant.”

Lady Mar, having recovered, re-entered the hall, just as Wallace had knelt down beside Helen. Maddened with

the sight of the man, on whom her soul doted, in such a position before her rival, she advanced hastily; and in a voice, which she vainly attempted to render composed and gentle, sternly said, "Alarmed as I have been by your apparent danger, I cannot but be uneasy at the attendant circumstances: tell me, therefore, and satisfy this anxious company, how it happened that you should be with the Regent, when we supposed you an invalid in your room; and were told he was gone to the citadel?"

A crimson blush overspread the cheeks of Helen, at this question; for, it was delivered in a tone, which insinuated that something more than accident had occasioned their meeting: but, as innocence dictated, she answered, "I was in the chapel at prayers; Sir William Wallace entered with the same design; and at the moment he desired me to mingle mine with his, this assassin appeared. I saw his dagger raised against our protector, and I saw no more."

There was not a heart present, that did not give credence to this account, but the polluted one of Lady Mar. Jealousy almost laid it bare. She smiled incredulously, and turning to the company, "Our noble friends will accept my apology, if in so delicate an investigation, I should beg that my family alone may be present."

Wallace perceived the tendency of her words; and not doubting the impression they might make on the minds of men ignorant of the virtues of Lady Helen, he instantly rose. "For once," cried he, "I must counteract a lady's orders. It is my wish, lords, that you will not leave this place, till I explain how I came to disturb the devotions of Lady Helen. Wearied with festivities, in which my alienated heart can so little share, I thought to pass an hour with Lord Montgomery in the citadel; and in seeking to avoid the crowded avenues of the palace, I entered the chapel. To my surprise I found Lady Helen there. I heard her pray for the happiness of Scotland, for the safety of her defenders; and my mind being in a frame to join in such petitions, I apologised for my unintentional intrusion, and begged permission to mingle my devotions with hers. Nay, impressed, and privileged by the sacredness of the place, I presumed still further; and before the altar of

purity, poured forth my gratitude for the duties she had paid to the remains of my murdered wife. It was at this moment, while clasping the sweet saint's hands in mine, that the assassin appeared. I heard Lady Helen scream, I felt her fall on my breast, and at that instant the dagger entered my back.

"This is the history of our meeting; and the assassin, whomsoever he may be, and how long soever he was in the church before he sought to perpetrate the deed,—were he to speak, and capable of uttering truth, could declare no other."

"But where is he to be found?" intemperately demanded Lady Mar.

"If his testimony be necessary to validate mine," returned Wallace, with dignity, "I believe Lady Helen can name him."

"Name him, Helen; name him, my dear cousin!" cried Murray; "that I may have some link with thee, O! let me avenge this deed! Tell me his name! and so yield me all that thou canst now bestow on Andrew Murray!"

There was something in the tone of Murray's voice, that penetrated to the heart of Helen. "I cannot name him whom I suspect, to any but Sir William Wallace: and I would not do it to him," replied she, "were it not to warn him against future danger. I did not see the assassin's face; therefore, how dare I set you to take vengeance on one who, perchance, may be innocent? I forgive him my blood, since Heaven has spared to Scotland its protector's."

"If he be a Southron," cried Baron Hilton, coming forward, "name him, gracious lady: and I will answer for it, that were he the son of a king, he would meet death from our monarch, for this unknighly outrage."

"I thank your zeal, brave chief," replied she; "but I would not abandon to certain death, even a wicked man. May he repent!—I will name him to Sir William Wallace alone; and when he knows his secret enemy, the vigilance of his own honour, I trust, will be his guard. Meanwhile, my father, I would withdraw." Then whis-

pering him, she was lifted in his arms and Murray's, and carried from the hall.

As she moved away, she cast her eyes on Wallace. He rose, and would have spoken, but she waved her hand to him, with an expression in her countenance of an adieu so heroic, yet so tender, that, feeling as if he were parting with a beloved sister, who had just risked her life for him, and whom he might never see again, he uttered not a word to any that were present, but turning another way, left the hall by an opposite door.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE CARSE OF STIRLINGO.

DAYBREAK gleamed over the sky, before the wondering spectators of the late extraordinary scene had dispersed to their quarters.

De Warenne was so well convinced by what had dropped from De Valence, of his having been the assassin, that when they met at sunrise, to take horse for the borders, he made him no other salutation than an exclamation of surprise, "not to find him under an arrest, for the last night's work!"

"The wily Scot knew better," replied De Valence, "than so to expose the reputation of the lady. He knew that she received the wound in his arms, and he durst not seize me, for fear I should proclaim it."

"He cannot fear that," replied De Warenne, "for he has proclaimed it himself. He has told every particular of his meeting with Lady Helen in the chapel; even her sheltering him with *her* arms; so there is nothing for you to declare, but your own infamy. For infamous I must call it, Lord Aymer; and nothing but the respect I owe my country, prevents me pointing the eyes of the indignant Scots to you; nothing but the stigma, your exposure would bring upon the English name, could make me conceal the deed."

De Valence laughed at this speech of De Warenne's. "Why, my Lord Warden," said he, "have you been taking lessons of this doughty Scot, that you talk thus? It was not with such sentiments you overthrew the princes of Wales, and made the kings of Ireland fly before you! You would tell another story were your own interest in question; and I can tell you, that my vengeance is not satisfied. I will yet see the brightness of those eyes on which the proud daughter of Mar hangs so fondly, extinguished in death. Maid or wife, Helen shall be torn from his arms; and if I cannot make her a virgin bride, she shall at least be mine as his widow; for I swear not to be disappointed."

"Shame, De Valence! I should blush to owe my courage to rivalry; or my perseverance in the field to a licentious passion! You know what you have confessed to me, were once your views on Helen Mar."

"Every man according to his constitution!" returned De Valence, and shrugging his shoulders, he mounted his horse.

The cavalcade of Southrons now appeared. They were met on the Carse by the Regent; who, not regarding the smart of a closing wound, advanced at the head of ten thousand men to escort his prisoners to the borders. By Helen's desire, Lord Mar had informed Wallace what had been the threats of De Valence; and that she suspected him to be the assassin. But this suspicion was put beyond a doubt by the evidence of the dagger, which Edwin found in the chapel: its hilt was enamelled with the martlets of De Valence.

At sight of it, a general indignation filled the Scottish chiefs; and assembling round their Regent, with one breath they demanded that the false earl should be detained, and punished as became the honour of nations, for so execrable a breach of all laws, human and divine. Wallace replied, that he believed the attack to have been instigated by a personal motive; and, therefore, as he was the object, not the state of Scotland, he should merely acquaint the Earl that his villany was known, and let the shame of disgrace be his punishment.

“ Ah !” observed Lord Bothwell, “ men who trample on conscience, soon get over shame.”

“ True,” replied Wallace ; “ but I suit my actions to my own mind, not to my enemy’s ; and if he cannot feel dishonour, I will not so far disparage myself as to think so worthless a creature deserving my resentment.”

While he was quieting the re-awakened indignation of his nobles, whose blood began to boil afresh at sight of the assassin, the Southron lords, conducted by Lord Mar, approached. When that nobleman drew near, Wallace’s first enquiry was for Lady Helen. The Earl informed him, he had received intelligence of her having slept without fever, and that she was not awake when the messenger came off with his good tidings. That all was likely to be well with her, was comfort to Wallace ; and, with an unruffled brow, riding up to the squadron of Southrons, which was headed by De Warenne and De Valence, he immediately approached the latter, and drawing out the dagger, held it towards him : “ The next time, Sir Earl,” said he, “ that you draw this dagger, let it be with a more knightly aim than assassination !”

De Valence, surprised, took it in confusion, and without answer ; but his countenance told the state of his mind. He was humbled by the man he hated ; and while a sense of the disgrace he had incurred tore his proud soul, he had not dignity enough to acknowledge the generosity of his enemy, in again giving him a life which his treachery had so often forfeited. Having taken the dagger, he wreaked the exasperated vengeance of his malice upon the senseless steel, and breaking it asunder, threw the pieces into the air ; while turning from Wallace with an affected disdain, he exclaimed to the shivered weapon, “ You shall not betray me again !”

“ Nor you betray our honours, Lord de Valence,” exclaimed Earl de Warenne : “ and therefore, though the nobleness of Sir William Wallace leaves you at large after this outrage on his person, we will assert our innocence of connivance with the deed ; and, as Lord Warden of this realm, I order you under an arrest till we pass the Scottish lines.”

“ ’Tis well,” cried Hilton, “ that such is your determination, my Lord ; else no honest man could have continued in the same company with one who has so tarnished the English name.”

“ No !” cried his brother baron, reining up his steed ; “ I would forfeit house and lands first.”

De Valence, with an ironical smile, looked towards the squadron which approached to obey De Warenne ; and haughtily answered, “ Though it be dishonour to you to march with me out of Scotland, the proudest of you all will deem it an honour to be allowed to return with me hither. I have an eye on those who stand with cap in hand to rebellion. And for you, Sir William Wallace,” added he, turning to him, who was also curbing his impatient charger, “ I hold no terms with a rebel ; and deem all honour that would rid my sovereign and the earth of such low-born arrogance.”

Before Wallace could answer, he saw De Valence struck from his horse by the Lochaber-axe of Edwin. Indignant at the insult offered his beloved commander, he had suddenly raised his arm ; and aiming a blow with all his strength, the Earl was immediately stunned, and precipitated to the ground.

At sight of the fall of the Southron chief, the Scottish troops, aware of there being some misunderstanding between their Regent and the English lords, uttered a shout. Wallace, to prevent accidents, sent instantly to the lines, to appease the tumult ; and throwing himself off his horse, hastened to the prostrate Earl. A fearful pause reigned throughout the Southron ranks. They did not know but that the enraged Scots would now fall on them, and, in spite of their Regent, exterminate them on the spot. The troops were running forward, when Wallace’s messengers arrived and checked them ; and himself, calling to Edwin, stopped his farther chastisement of the recovering earl.

“ Edwin, you have done wrong,” cried he ; “ give me that weapon, which you have sullied by raising it against a prisoner totally in our power.”

With a vivid blush, the noble boy resigned the weapon to his general ; yet, with an unappeased glance on the pros-

trate De Valence, he exclaimed, "But have you not granted life twice to this prisoner? and has he not, in return, raised his hand against your life and Lady Helen? You pardon him again! and, in the moment of your clemency, he insults the Lord Regent of Scotland, in the face of both nations! I could not bear this, and live without making him feel that you have those about you who will not forgive such crimes."

"Edwin," returned Wallace, "had not the Lord Regent power to punish? And if he see right to hold his hand, those who do it for him invade his dignity. I should be unworthy the honour of protecting a brave nation, did I stoop to tread on every reptile that stings me in my path. Leave Lord de Valence to the sentence his commander has pronounced; and, as an expiation for your having offended both military and moral law this day, you must remain at Stirling till I return into Scotland."

De Valence, hardly awake from the stupor which the blow of the battle-axe had occasioned (for indignation had given to the young warrior the strength of manhood), was raised from the ground; and soon after coming to himself, and being made sensible of what had happened, he was taken, foaming with rage and mortification, into the centre of the Southron lines.

Alarmed at the confusion he saw at a distance, Lord Montgomery ordered his litter round from the rear to the front; and hearing all that had passed, joined with De Warenne, in pleading for the abashed Edwin.

"His youth and zeal," cried Montgomery, "are sufficient to excuse the intemperance of the deed."

"No!" interrupted Edwin; "I have offended, and I will expiate. Only, my honoured Lord," said he, approaching Wallace, while he checked the emotion which would have flowed from his eyes, "when I am absent, sometimes remember that it was Edwin's love which hurried him to this disgrace."

"My dear Edwin," returned Wallace, "there are many impetuous spirits in Scotland, who need the lesson I now enforce upon you; and they will be brought to maintain the law of honour, when they see that their Regent spares

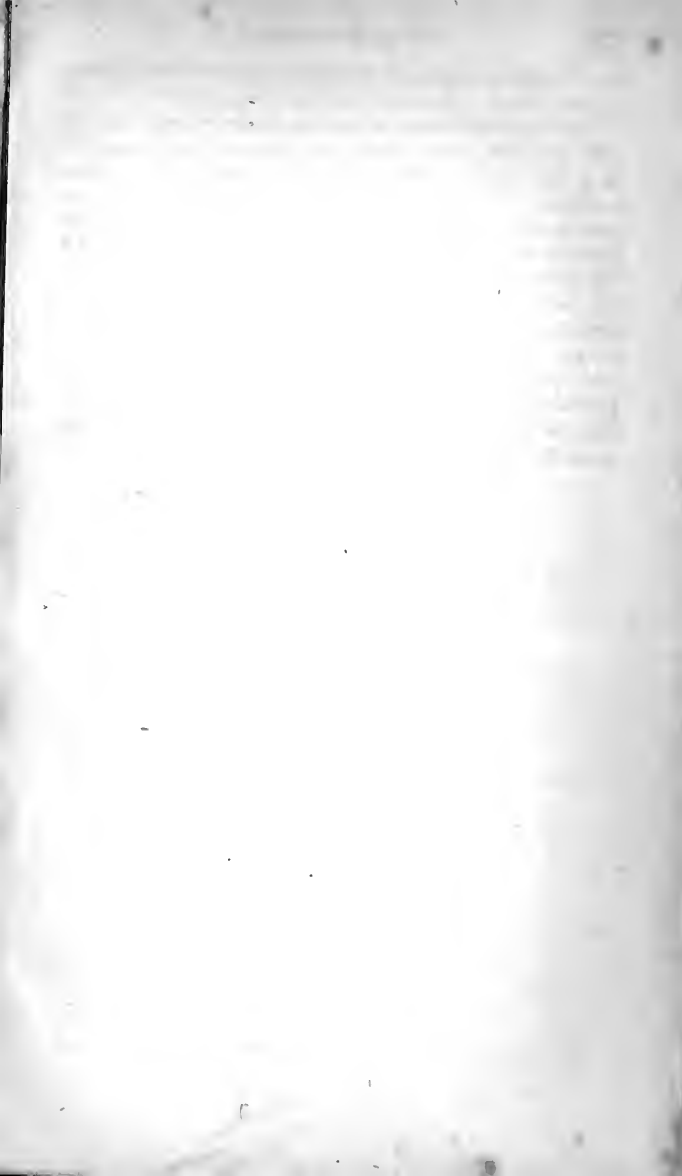
not its slightest violation, even when committed by his best beloved friend.—Farewell, till we meet again!”

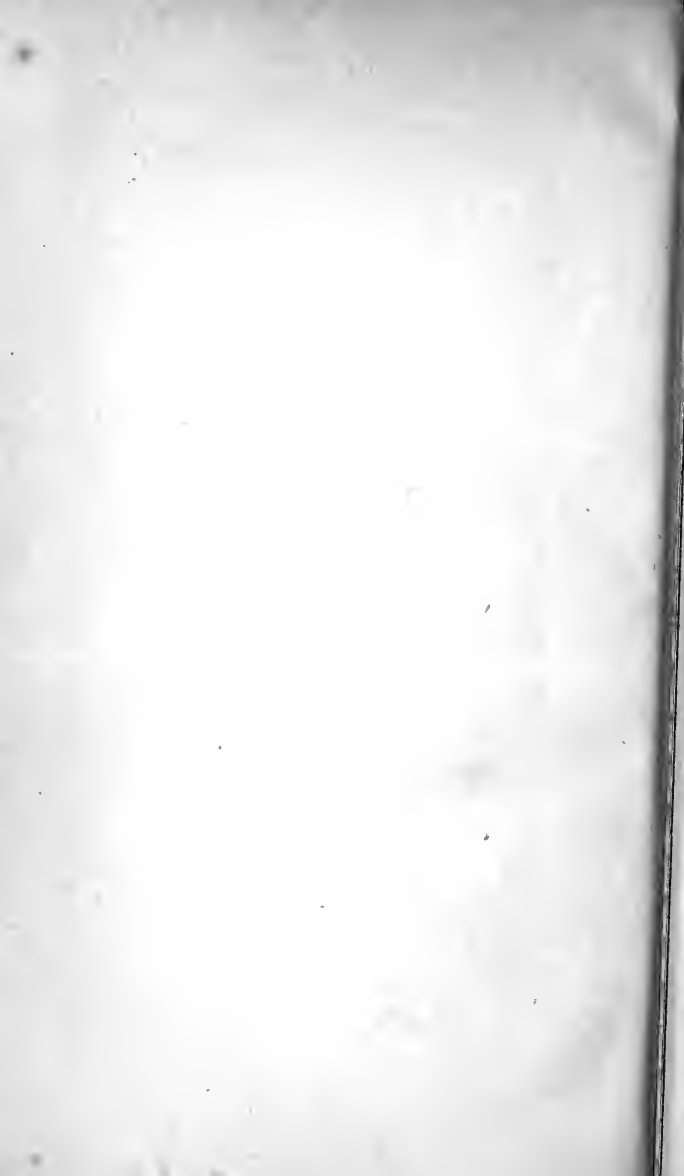
Edwin kissed Wallace's hand in silence—it was now wet with his tears; and drawing his bonnet hastily over his eyes, he retired into the rear of Lord Mar's party. That nobleman soon after took leave of the Regent; who, placing himself at the head of his legions, the trumpets blew the signal of march. Edwin, at the sound, which, a few minutes before, he would have greeted with so much joy, felt his grief-swoln heart give way; he sobbed aloud, and, striking his heel on the side of his horse, galloped to a distance, to hide from all eyes the violence of his regrets. The trampling of the departing troops rolled over the ground like receding thunder. Edwin at last stole a look towards the plain; he beheld a vast cloud of dust, but no more the squadrons of his friend.

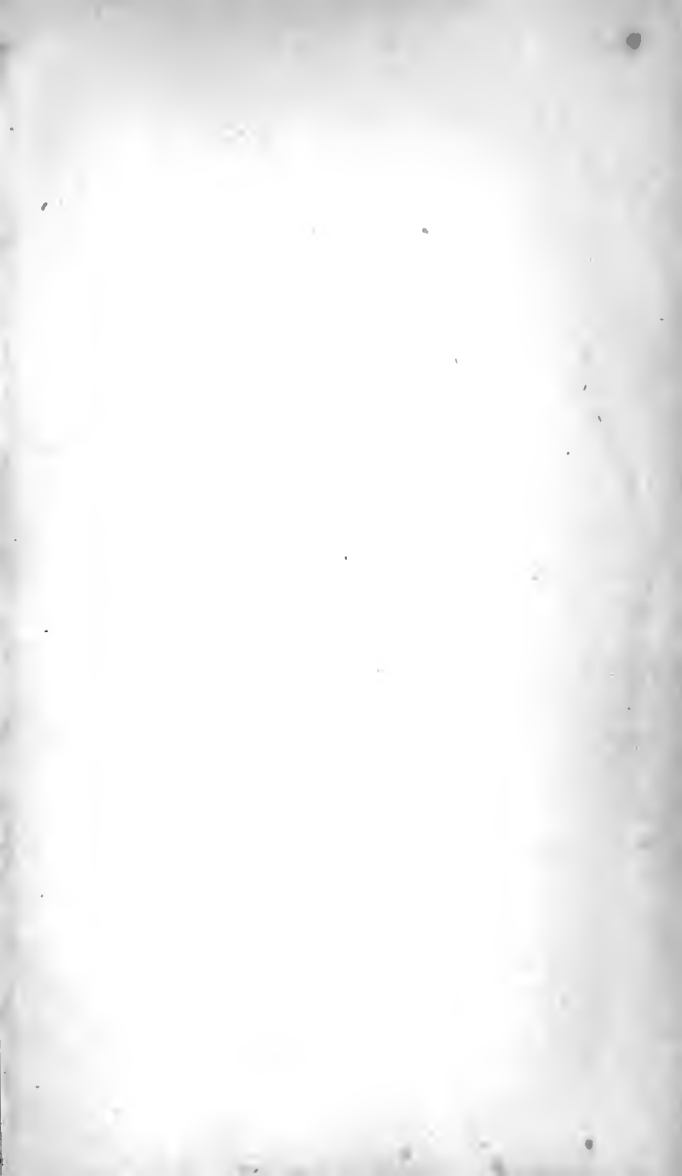
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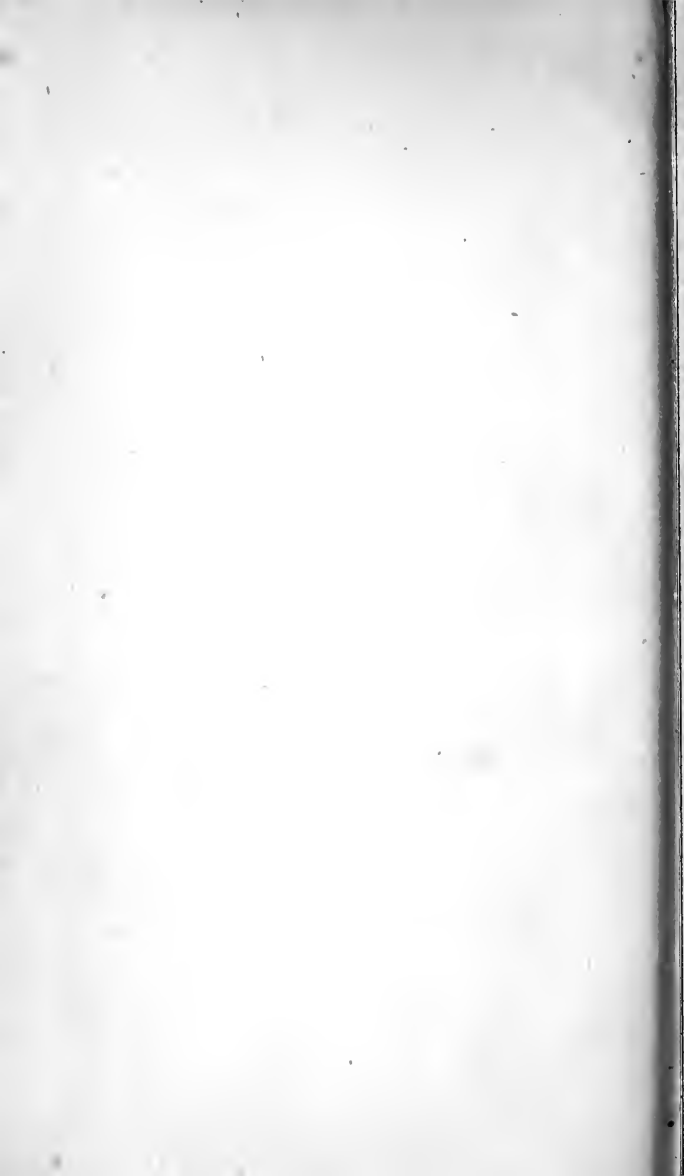
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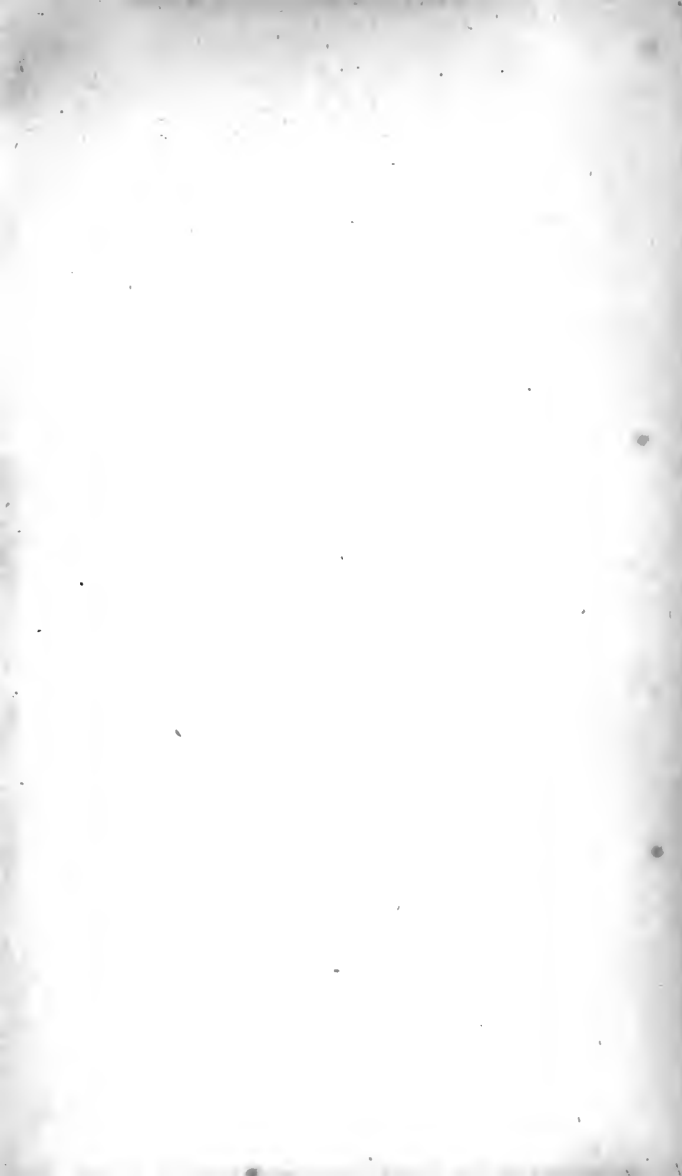
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